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Christian preaching of the Old Testament: A Study of Sidney Greidanus and Abraham Kuruvilla on Genesis 22.

Alvin Davies

Abstract

The interpretive movement from text, to Christ, to pulpit, combines a number of theological disciplines. It is the multifaceted nature of this task that means preachers face a complex challenge. Preachers seek to do justice to both the text of Scripture, and the 'rule of centrality' in the hermeneutic movement to Christ. This movement finds its ultimate challenge in preaching Christ from the ancient Old Testament text. It is this task that this thesis is concerned with.

Two scholars will be studied and compared in terms of their theoretical programmes of methodology, their interpretation of text and their preaching – Sidney Greidanus and Abraham Kuruvilla. These scholars have been chosen because of their similarity of published works, evangelical traditions and geographical location - USA (for one's context always influences one's interpretation). They are also selected due to their diverse approaches to preaching. Further to this, both use the *Akedah* in Genesis 22 as an example text, thus making a clear comparison possible.

This comparison will form the majority of this study and other scholars and preachers will be brought in where relevant. These will include evangelical preachers that are either 'classic voices' or have been recorded in text, or audio file, from the latter half of the twentieth century to the present.

In conclusion it will be argued that each scholar appeals to distinct theological principles. Greidanus gives weight to the Bible in regards to what God has done, and so preaches justification. Kuruvilla gives weight to the Bible with regards to human obedience, and so preaches sanctification. However, both unite in defaulting to the use of 'parallel narrative resonance' (Genesis 22 with Golgotha) – a position that appears to fall outside presented method (Kuruvilla), and interpretation (Greidanus).

**Christian preaching of the Old Testament:
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Genesis 22.**

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2015

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Abbreviations

ACD	Audio Compact Disc
<i>CTM</i>	Concordia Theological Monthly
esp.	Especially
ET	English Translation
ft.	Footnote
HR	Historic Redemptive (being a broader term than Greidanus' RHP)
ifc	Inside front cover
ISB	Internet Sermon Bibliography
<i>J</i>	Judaism [Journal]
OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
<i>PR</i>	Presbyterian and Reformed
RHP	Redemptive-historical progression
RH	Redemptive Historical (term used by Kuruvilla)
<i>VT</i>	Vetus Testamentum
<i>VTSup</i>	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
<i>WTJ</i>	Westminster Theological Journal

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I would like to acknowledge with deepest gratitude my supervising Professor, R.W.L. Moberly - without whose faith, teaching, time, patience, insight and guidance this work would have never become what it is, or crossed the finish line. Thank you.

Many thanks to Sidney Greidanus and Abraham Kuruvilla - both of whom I have learnt so much from in writing this thesis. I was greatly encouraged by both scholars' warmth in welcoming this study. In particular, I must highlight Sidney Greidanus' generosity in forwarding me the unpublished typed, and hand edited, text of his 1976 sermon on Genesis 22 with permission for use (a document of interest that importantly completed my primary resources, and thus made this study by comparison possible).

I would also like to thank: Mandy and my mother and father for support, help and encouragement, Pastor Simon Medcroft and the congregants of Danbury Mission Evangelical Church for guidance, friendship, prayer and financial assistance, similarly thanks to Reg, Stephen and Delphine. Finally thank you to Simon Ponsonby, who with the late Roy Hession has inspired me as a friend towards preaching Scripture well, to the cause of sharing Christ, and knowing Him more.

Dedication

For those who wrestle to communicate ***Word*** and ***WORD***, with ***Word***.

Introduction

Biblical interpretation in preaching is a complex task, involving considerable interaction with a number of theological disciplines. Scholars within the academy are often able to focus specifically on such given areas as; New Testament, Old Testament, Biblical Theology and Christian Doctrine. However, the task of the preacher is not only to interact with these disciplines, but also with Hermeneutics and Homiletics, to interpret and communicate Scripture well with reasonable application to the congregant (no matter the education, knowledge and standing of the sermon recipient).

Of course, the preacher must also possess an understanding of spirituality, and also, in some respects, art. Indeed, this claim is made concerning 'art' because the hermeneutical exercise of the biblical scholar is hardly a task straightforward, plain, or of a solely scientific nature. Brevard Childs has stated,

Biblical interpretation as an art does not operate by a precise accumulation of scientific data, nor is its method so easily outlined. One tends to describe the product as illuminating, profound, or brilliant.¹

Therefore, it is the engagement of interpretation as art, in combination with a rigorous scientific approach to theological disciplines, and their subsequent conveyance to the life of the church that is foundational to the sermon content and application.² However, the task of the preacher is yet even greater, for many preachers would hold a classic position concerning 'the rule of centrality' which requires the preacher to preach making credible links from text to Christ. The rule of centrality and its complex hermeneutic linking finds ultimate challenge when moving from the Old Testament text to Christ. It is this task that this thesis will focus upon.

Such a focus might well have been considered academically improbable two decades ago. However, over the last fifteen years developments in general biblical interpretation, along with a growing number of specific hermeneutic works published for homiletic application, has meant that today there is indeed a good amount of work to draw upon for research, discussion and critique.

Introducing the work of Greidanus and Kuruvilla

Sidney Greidanus has made a significant contribution within this field since the early 1970s as a seminary professor, though his main publications of consideration here began to take their place on

¹ Childs, Brevard S. 1970, *Biblical Theology in Crisis*, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, p, 140.

² The 'art' of/in interpretation may be seen as particularly present within the area of 'reader response' interpretation.

preachers' shelves from the late 1980s onwards (most since 1999). Greidanus presents a classic 'Historic Redemptive' (HR) hermeneutic and while others have also offered similar approaches, here Greidanus' work will be compared with that of a recent offering in the form of a very different hermeneutic from the 'new young upstart', Abraham Kuruvilla, whose main works under consideration here were first published in 2013 and 2014.

When comparing the above scholars it is important to note their published works, for Kuruvilla's mirror those of Greidanus before him.

Greidanus.

1988 - *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*.³

1999- *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutic Method* (using Genesis 22 as an example of the proposed hermeneutic).⁴

2007- *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons*.⁵

Kuruvilla.

2009 - *Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue*.⁶

2013 - *Privilege the Text: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (also using Genesis 22 as an example of the proposed hermeneutic).⁷

2014 - *Genesis: A Theological Commentary for Preachers*.⁸

With Kuruvilla and Greidanus both having similar conservative evangelical backgrounds one might expect them to hold similar approaches regarding a hermeneutic methodology for homiletic application.⁹ Nothing could be further from the truth, and thus such a stark difference of opinion could well be the reason for a similar pattern of published works, with Kuruvilla writing from a

³ Greidanus, Sidney 1988, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.

⁴ Greidanus, Sidney 1999, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutic Method*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.

⁵ Greidanus, Sidney 2007, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.

⁶ Kuruvilla, Abraham 2009, *Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue*, London, Bloomsbury.

⁷ Kuruvilla, Abraham 2013, *Privilege the Text: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*. Chicago, Moody.

⁸ Kuruvilla, Abraham 2014, *Genesis: A Theological Commentary for Preachers*, Oregon, Resource Publications.

⁹ Their tradition is apparent both from reading their works as well as also from their respective teaching posts held. Greidanus, though now retired from day-to-day involvement at Calvin Theological Seminary still maintains close ties with the college where he held the post of 'Professor of Preaching.' Kuruvilla currently holds the post of 'Professor of Pastoral Ministries' at Dallas Theological Seminary. Both scholars are of an orthodox and conservative evangelical tradition holding a high regard for the Biblical canon as the inerrant word of God, as seen from their close scrutiny of the text. Kuruvilla states his 'full disclosure' as follows, 'I come to Scripture as a conservative Protestant Christian, an Indian-American with no formal political affiliation, schooled in Asia, N. America, and Europe, who is heterosexual in orientation but celibate for the cause of Christ, and who is a professor, a preacher, and a physician.' See Kuruvilla (2013: 67, ft. 78).

somewhat reactive position. It is clear that Kuruvilla has read and reviewed Greidanus' work and specifically argues against his position (to which Greidanus has responded¹⁰). The making of such a head-to-head challenge does of course generate the possibility for scholarly 'rucking.' Yet both scholars show careful dignity in interaction, and their conversation informs this study as a healthy debate. Indeed it is their diverse approaches from within the same tradition which here presents an intriguing study.

For example, Greidanus' 2007 work, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, was critically reviewed by Kuruvilla for the *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* in 2008.¹¹ Greidanus was unhappy with the review and in an email to the author of this thesis stated the following,

Dr Kuruvilla wrote the worst review of my book *Preaching Christ from Genesis* I ever saw. I am not in the habit of responding to reviews but in this one case I did. It also happens that I had not discarded my old computer and was able to retrieve my response to him. I will attach it to this email.¹²

Greidanus signed off the aforementioned email with the following comment and quotation from Kuruvilla,

Kuruvilla wrote a short but courteous response. The key paragraph was: "Your comments have served (and will continue to serve) as a helpful springboard to many fruitful discussions. I do realise that significant differences remain between our respective approaches to preaching."¹³

Kuruvilla is certainly accurate in saying that Greidanus' work continues to serve many 'fruitful discussions' for his publications have been, and continue to be a significant resource for both students and teachers of preaching. The above email, supplied with permission for use by Greidanus, will at times be referenced.¹⁴

¹⁰ See Appendix II.

¹¹ Kuruvilla, Abraham 2008, 'Book Review - Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons' in, *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 8, pp. 137-140.

¹² See Appendix II. Note that by 'worst' here Greidanus means 'the most critical,' or 'least favourable.' He suggests that Kuruvilla does not fully represent his position well, and he outlines a number of points he would like to address. There is no doubt that Kuruvilla's book review is a critique via his own methodology, rather than being a review from a broader perspective of preaching methodology.

¹³ See Appendix II.

¹⁴ Complete transcript in Appendix I.

Thesis Aims, Objectives and Methodology

The aims of this thesis are:

- 1) To compare, critique and contrast two different hermeneutics for preaching from the evangelical tradition (Greidanus and Kuruvilla).
- 2) To determine the strengths, weaknesses, and tractability of each method in theory and practice (from method, to exegesis, to preached sermon),
- 3) To therefore gain a good understanding of the specific concerns of Genesis 22 as the example text, while remaining with the concerns of Greidanus and Kuruvilla.

It should be noted that, this study does not intend to be a cataloguing of interpretation on the *Akedah*, as it will interact only with the concerns of our two scholars and those whose work is relevant to their interpretations.

The above task will be split into two primary sections: 1) Methodology, and 2) Interpretation, exegesis, and preaching. Section one will present and analyse both scholars' overall hermeneutical programmes in terms of their methodologies presented. Section two will analyse these programmes applied to their example text of Genesis 22. The conclusion will analyse and compare the: strengths, weakness and ability of both scholars' methods and hermeneutics in exegesis and practice.

Before engaging with Greidanus and Kuruvilla concerning methodology it is important to outline their different styles and aims in writing, as both scholars have approaches that may be regarded as having both strengths and weaknesses, depending on perspective and audience.

Greidanus and Kuruvilla: Literary aims and styles

When reading Kuruvilla's *Privileging the Text* it is clear throughout the work that he is approaching hermeneutic methodology with a strong and rigorous academic ability and tone which engages with current hermeneutic scholarship. His methodology, like that of Greidanus, also interacts with traditional historical influences such as Luther, Calvin and the Church Fathers as well as the much more recent 'canonical approach' of Brevard Childs.¹⁵ However, Kuruvilla's work is more up-to-date in terms of its interaction with current recent progressions in hermeneutics as he directly utilises the work of Paul Ricoeur¹⁶ as well as incorporating concepts such as 'distanciation' and 'transhistorical

¹⁵ Kuruvilla also regularly uses the work of R.W.L. Moberly who has progressed Childs' 'canonical approach' as noted by Thiselton in, Thiselton, Anthony C. 2006, 'Canon Community and Theological Construction', in Bartholomew, Craig (with Hahn, Parry, Seitz, Wolters), *Canon and Biblical Interpretation: Scripture and Hermeneutics Series*, Vol. 7, Milton Keynes, Paternoster, pp. 1-10, esp. 7.

¹⁶ By stating that Kuruvilla 'directly' utilises Paul Ricoeur's work it should be noted that Childs (whose work Greidanus uses) states his own use of Ricoeur, though there is no evidence of Greidanus' direct engagement

intention.’¹⁷ In so doing Kuruvilla’s work fits well with the academy and demonstrates how methodology for preaching can indeed be a credible contribution to academic hermeneutics.

That which Kuruvilla gains in academic endeavour in *Privileging the Text* he perhaps loses in terms of communication. Stanley E. Porter states that the book ‘provides an accessible entry-point into this vital topic’, yet such a comment should not pass without also stating that this is specifically an ‘accessible entry-point’ for students and scholars who already have good understanding of hermeneutical and theological concepts and terminology - something which often the average preacher may not have engaged with in depth, if at all.¹⁸ Thus Porter’s comment in reality relates to those who are in, or have already had, a reasonably advanced theological education rather than the relatively untrained lay preacher - or many preachers from nonconformist traditions, for example.¹⁹

In contrast, Greidanus’ work comes across as a method that is aimed at being accessible to the vast majority of preachers, no matter their academic level. Thus Greidanus should not be seen as a lesser

with Ricoeur’s works. Like Childs, Kuruvilla uses Ricoeur’s concept of ‘the world in front of the text’ as being his prime area of engagement as he interprets Scripture with respect to its final canonical form. He does also of course engage with Ricoeur’s ‘world of the text’ but rejects ‘the world behind the text as being far less important for preaching hermeneutics which utilise the final form of the text. See Kuruvilla (2013: 27, 39-43, 46, 48, 50, 56, 64, 82, 92, 113, 116, 117, 130, 184, 246-7) and, Childs, Brevard S., 1979, *Introduction to Old Testament as Scripture*, Philadelphia, Fortress, p. 77.

¹⁷ Kuruvilla defines ‘distanciation’ saying, ‘Texts have been estranged from their creators, their original audiences, and circumstances of composition. This is a phenomenon technically called distanciation, the distancing between the event of saying and the content of saying... from an oral-aural world, where utterance was spoken and heard, the message has been translocated into a textual-visual world where discourse is written and seen’ in Kuruvilla (2013: 35-39). Kuruvilla demonstrates how ‘transhistorical intention’ is bound together with Ricoeur’s language/work by stating, ‘What authors are doing is projecting a *world in front of the text* bearing an intention that is transhistorical, transcending the specific circumstances of the author and writing; i.e., the text is given a future orientation, enabling valid application by readers at locations and times far removed from those of the event of inscription.’ In Kuruvilla (2013: 27). It should also be noted that even though Brevard Childs’ ‘canonical approach’ (interpretation, in the realm of church as community) is not cited often, it certainly is present in an overarching sense within much of Kuruvilla’s work. Though rare, Kuruvilla does cite a ‘go-to’ Childs quotation regarding this - ‘The Bible is, without doubt, the church’s book and, therefore attributing to that book the qualities and properties of Scripture is to acknowledge the pre-eminence of the canon in shaping the life of the church and the individual when it is employed in the context of the Christian community. Thus, for its reading and application, the arena of action is the congregation of God’s people of all time. This normative, fixed corpus of religious literature is to be interpreted within the community of faith that acknowledges it as Scripture and affirms its applicability to its life.’ In Kuruvilla (2013: 82), citing Childs, Brevard S. 1970, *Biblical Theology in Crisis*, Philadelphia, Westminster, pp. 99, and Kelsey, David H. 1975, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, Philadelphia, Fortress, pp. 91-93.

¹⁸ Stanley E. Porter as quoted in Kuruvilla (2013: ifc).

¹⁹ This is stated from the thesis author’s personal experience and perspective having attended a variety of church fellowships in the UK over four decades, including Anglican, Brethren, free evangelical and Pentecostal. Regarding these traditions I have found that, in the vast majority of cases, it is primarily Anglican ordinands, who undergo seminary training with considerable academic engagement, that are versed in the kind of concepts and scholarly interaction that Kuruvilla is utilising. In some cases even Anglican seminaries do not touch upon many of them in depth, for it depends on the seminary, expertise of tutors and the course/modules (which often the student chooses), as to their engagement within the discipline of hermeneutics.

scholar than Kuruvilla. Indeed his work shows evidence of engagement with concepts such as the 'canonical interpretation' of Brevard Childs, 'distanciation' and 'transhistorical' issues, for example.²⁰ *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* should be seen as being well aimed at a given target audience. Further to this it must be noted that critique of Greidanus' work should only come from the perspective of its date of authorship (1999), prior to recent, considerable progress, in the field of hermeneutics. That said, it is of course still very questionable whether Greidanus' would have chosen to present such concepts in the way that Kuruvilla has, due to his target audience. While this leaves Greidanus with less apparent 'hermeneutic tools' for our in depth critique, it should not go unnoticed that his proposal of *A Contemporary Hermeneutic Method*²¹ for preaching was timely and has paved the way for Kuruvilla, who likewise has now further paved the way for ongoing discussion in this field.

²⁰ For example, concerning 'transhistorical' and 'distanciation' see Greidanus (1999: 10, 13). For a more extensive view see Greidanus (1996: 158-187). For Greidanus on canonical interpretation see Greidanus (1999: 51, 140-5, 232-44, 248, 258).

²¹ Subheading of Greidanus (1999).

Section One: Methodologies

Chapter one

Methodology for preaching Christ from the Old Testament: Sidney Greidanus

Sidney Greidanus sets out his hermeneutic in his work, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*.¹ Therefore, here this work will be our primary work of reference used to build an understanding of his historic redemptive (HR) method and the influences and reasoning behind it.

Greidanus interacts at some length with historic biblical interpretation and thus he engages with reception history as an important facet of the formation of his methodology for interpretation. Therefore Greidanus' use of the historical interpreters, that are specifically important to his work, will be noted here, while those deemed to have had a lesser influence will be omitted (due to space). In particular we find that the Church Fathers, Luther and Calvin are significant for him as they form much of Greidanus' methodological foundation both positively and antithetically.

Greidanus and 'Preaching Christ'

From the outset Greidanus notes that there is significant 'confusion about the meaning of preaching Christ.'² Therefore he states that 'instead of adding another definition to a long list, we will find it... valuable to examine the New Testament regarding the meaning of "preaching Christ." After all, the apostles first coined the phrase.'³

By using C.H. Dodd's New Testament synthesis of the content of the apostles' preaching Greidanus notes the apostolic 'breadth of preaching Christ,' which can be summarised as the preaching of 'the cross,' 'the resurrection' and 'the kingdom of God.'⁴ From this synthesis, and using his own overall methodology and wider New Testament usage, Greidanus is thus able to define what he means by "preaching Christ,"

On the basis of this New Testament testimony, we can sketch the contours of what "preaching Christ" means. To clear the deck, it may be well to state first what it is not. Preaching Christ is not, of course, merely mentioning the name of Jesus Christ in a sermon. It is not identifying Christ with Yahweh in the Old Testament, or the Angel of Yahweh, or the Commander of the Lord's army, or the wisdom of God. It is not simply pointing to Christ from a distance or "drawing lines to Christ" by way of typology. Positively, preaching Christ is as broad as preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God. One has only to look at a concordance to see how often the New Testament speaks of

¹ Greidanus (1999).

² Greidanus (1999: 2).

³ Greidanus (1999: 3).

⁴ Greidanus (1999: 4) citing Dodd, C.H. 1936, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Development*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, p:38-43, and also Acts 13:30, 32; 17:31, 28:31, 20:25, Rom. 3:25-26; 5:9-10; 8:32-34 and 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2, 15:1-4, 12, 2 Cor. 4:5, Matt. 28:18, 2 Tim. 2:8.

“the Gospel of the kingdom,” “the Gospel of Christ,” “the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” the Gospel of the grace of God,” and “the Gospel of peace.” In these terms two characteristics stand out. Preaching Christ is good news for people, and preaching Christ is as broad as preaching the gospel of the kingdom – as long as this kingdom is related to its King, Jesus.

More specifically, preaching Christ is to proclaim some facet of the person, work, or teaching of Jesus of Nazareth so that people may believe him, trust him, love him, and obey him.⁵

Reasons for, and necessity of, preaching Christ from the Old Testament as the ‘telos’ of a ‘redemption meta-narrative’

Greidanus clearly defines how he sees the character/nature of the OT as Christian Scripture. However, he does note and discuss other recent approaches,

A person’s view of the Old Testament is so decisive hermeneutically that it governs all subsequent interpretation. In contemporary views, we can distinguish at least four different positions on the character of the Old Testament: (1) ... sub-Christian, (2) ...non-Christian, (3)... pre-Christian, and (4)... Christian.⁶

Greidanus simply rejects the category of ‘sub-Christian’ and moves quickly past such a perspective noting those scholars ‘who rejected the Old Testament outright or had minimal use for it.’⁷

Regarding the claim that the Old Testament might be seen as non-Christian, Greidanus states,

It should be clear that the question is not, Whose book is the Old Testament? The Jews claim *Tanakh* as their holy Scriptures; Christians claim the Old Testament as part of their canon; Mormons claim the Old Testament alongside the Book of Mormon;⁸ Muslims claim parts of Old Testament for their Koran. In the course of history this sacred book has been accepted as Scripture by a wide variety of faiths. However, the question is not whose book it is. The question is rather, In which context does it find interpretation.⁹

Having rendered any thought of the OT as being non-Christian as irrelevant, due to his own context for interpretation being Christian, Greidanus affirms the OT as ‘Christian’ and not pre-Christian – which he recognises as a chronological claim only,

There is a sense in which we can call the Old Testament “pre-Christian,” but then we are speaking chronologically, that is, we are saying that the Old Testament existed before Christianity. But this description does not say anything about its character. We could also call the foundations of a house “pre-house,” but all along we know that these

⁵ Greidanus (1999: 8).

⁶ Greidanus (1999: 39).

⁷ Greidanus names, ‘Marcion, Schleiermacher, Harnack, Delitzsch, Bultmann, Baumägrtel, Weatherhead’ and states that, ‘In North America one can think of some social gospel preachers who produce their messages within the framework of Liberal Theology and use the Old Testament selectively. They reject much of the Old Testament as sub-Christian, but they did find some worthwhile nuggets here and there, especially the call for social justice by the prophets.’ Greidanus (1999: 39).

⁸ Greidanus clarifies – ‘As well as sections of Isaiah within the Book of Mormon.’ In Greidanus (1999: 40, ft. 17).

⁹ Greidanus (1999: 40).

foundations are an integral part of the house. In like manner, we could say that the Old Testament is “pre-Christian,” but all along we know that its essence is not “pre-Christian” but “Christian.” “Christian describes the *character* of the Old Testament, its nature.”¹⁰

Greidanus supports the OT as Christian from 2 Timothy 3:16 as referring to the OT, saying ‘The Old Testament was the Bible of the authors of the New Testament.’¹¹

The primary methodological move of Greidanus that supports the preaching of Christ from the Old Testament is specifically the canonical nature of the Old Testament and its relationship to the New and Christ’s role in this, as we shall see in due course. He states,

In spite of the many major hurdles, there are many reasons why pastors must preach from the Old Testament: (1) the Old Testament is part of the Christian canon, (2) it discloses the history of redemption leading to Christ, (3) it proclaims truths not found in the New Testament, (4) it helps us understand the New Testament, (5) it prevents misunderstanding the New Testament, and (6) it provides a fuller understanding of Christ.¹²

He also importantly notes that ‘the teaching of Jesus is an indispensable component for preaching Christ from the Old Testament, for the Old Testament was Jesus’ Bible, and he [Jesus] based his teaching on it.’¹³

From the above points we can note an increasing understanding of Greidanus’ main facet of his methodology, that is, that the witness of the Old Testament to Christ concerns Him as the fulfilment of the canon’s meta-narrative of the history of redemption.

Concerning ‘The Necessity of Preaching Christ from the Old Testament’¹⁴ Greidanus state that,

Although this [heading] may seem like a logical outcome, this blending of two distinct topics confronts us with a whole new set of issues: the non-Christian or Christian character of the Old Testament, the relation of the Old Testament to New, the way in which the Old Testament witnesses to Christ, and the benefits of preaching Christ specifically from the Old Testament.¹⁵

For Greidanus to preach Christ well from the Old Testament is a necessity for it corrects questionable methodologies in preaching. These impaired methods, which are to be avoided, include: a) ‘The temptation of human centred preaching’¹⁶ where biographical preaching, or character preaching might lead to a sole message of ethical adjustment (‘Unable to preach Christ

¹⁰ Greidanis (1999: 44).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Greidanus (1999: 25).

¹³ Greidanus (1999: 10).

¹⁴ Greidanus (1999: 33).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Greidanus (1999: 34).

and him crucified , we preach humanity and it improved')¹⁷, b) 'The concern about forced interpretation' (Greidanus admits that formerly his 'main concern was that such a strict requirement would lead to forced interpretation, as one find in allegorising and typologising')¹⁸, and c) 'The separation of the Old and New Testament' where 'many preachers... view the Old Testament as a non-Christian book [and] consequently, they are opposed to any kind of "christological Interpretation" from the outset'¹⁹ (and which means that they therefore see the Old Testament text as being 'sub,' 'non' or 'pre-Christian').

Therefore, for Greidanus, preaching Christ from the Old Testament must not be solely ethical and one's concerns over allegorising and typologising are not legitimate reasons not to strive for a sound christocentric methodology. He clearly sees the Old Testament as Christian as being fully integrated with the New Testament in 'a unified history of redemption... [as] a single Scripture consisting of two Testaments'²⁰ where, 'the Old Testament is open to the future'²¹ through 'the final fulfilment of God's promises,'²² because 'a single-redemptive History underlies both testaments.'²³ In this unity he significantly states that 'Christ is the link between two testaments,'

Jesus Christ is the link between Old Testament and New. God's revelation reaches its climax in the New Testament – and this climax is not a new teaching or a new law, but a person, God's own Son.²⁴

Therefore for Greidanus Christ should be preached from the Old Testament because both Testaments are related 'not as law-Gospel but as promise-fulfilment (a person)' – but God has "spoken by a Son" (Heb 1:1-2), and in being revealed (John 14:9) is the "mystery" of God uncovered (1 Tim 3:16) in time, history and canon.²⁵

'The Old Testament must be interpreted from the Perspective of the New'²⁶

For Greidanus the above heading is not a totally stand-alone statement for he adds that the context of the Old Testament is significant in itself, though not in complete isolation,

The Old Testament must be interpreted not only in its own context but also in the context of the New Testament.

¹⁷ Greidanus (1999: 33/4) quoting Willimon in, Willimon, Mead C. 1992, *Peculiar Speech: Preaching to the Baptised*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, p. 9.

¹⁸ Greidanus (1999: 36).

¹⁹ Greidanus (1999: 37/8).

²⁰ Greidanus (1999: 45).

²¹ Greidanus (1999: 46).

²² Ibid.

²³ Greidanus (1999: 49).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Greidanus (1999: 49/50).

²⁶ Greidanus (1999: 51).

This conclusion is but an application of the standard hermeneutical principle that every text must be understood in its context. Since the literary context of the Old Testament in the Christian canon is the New Testament, this means that the Old Testament must be understood in the context of the New Testament. And since the heart of the New Testament is Jesus Christ, this means that every message from the Old Testament must be seen in the light of Jesus Christ.

The necessity to read the Old Testament from the perspective of the New also follows from the progressive nature of redemption history. The arrival of Jesus in the “fullness of time” and God’s final revelation in him calls for reading the Old Testament from the perspective of this final revelation.²⁷

However, that said, for Greidanus the Old Testament text must also still be interpreted on its own terms before looking towards a Christological interpretation through the perspective of the New Testament in the complete canonical context. In his methodological outline he outlines the following six steps before moving towards formulating a sermon outline and form,

1. Select a textual unit with an eye to congregational needs.
2. Read and reread the text in its literary context.
3. Outline the structure of the text.
4. Interpret the text in its own historical setting.
5. Formulate the text’s theme and goal.
6. Understand the message in the contexts of canon and redemptive history.²⁸

The Old Testament must be interpreted as the original author intended

Greidanus’ fourth step here means that one must firstly seek to interpret the text as the original author intended to understand how Israel would have heard the textual unit as originally conveyed. He often commends scholars when they, at least in some sense, engage with the original author’s intention, such as Chrysostom,²⁹ Augustine³⁰ and Calvin³¹ and he also rejects allegorical interpretation on the grounds of its lack of authorial intent (along with some others aspects of medieval four fold interpretation³²). For Greidanus, to hold to the original meaning is to hold to the text with reasonable interpretational boundaries,

²⁷ Greidanus (1999: 51-2).

²⁸ Greidanus (1999: 279-80).

²⁹ Greidanus (1999: 95).

³⁰ Greidanus (1999: 100).

³¹ Greidanus (1999: 148).

³² For Greidanus on allegorical interpretation and authorial intent see Greidanus (1999: 36). Greidanus notes that ‘fourfold interpretation forced the text to speak in ways the author may not have intended – allegorical, moral, and eschatological – and thus the message tended to lose its Biblical authority’ (Greidanus critiquing Aquinas in Greidanus (1999: 108)). Greidanus himself concludes that allegorical interpretation, “Obscures the true meaning of the Word of God... The Bible treated allegorically becomes putty in the hand of the exegete.” Instead of preachers being ministers (servants) of the word, they become its masters.’ Greidanus in Greidanus (1999: 88), quoting Ramm, Bernhard. 1970, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*, Grand Rapids, Baker, p. 29).

This original, historical understanding is important for preachers because it offers the only objective point of control against deriving from the text all kinds of subjective and arbitrary messages... the original meaning can also prevent a Christomonistic reduction of its meaning... for the original message of the Old Testament is clearly God centred.³³

And he gives a practical methodology as to how the original meaning might be obtained,

To uncover the original, historical meaning of a passage, preachers need to do justice to three intertwined strands of the text: the literary, the historical, and the theocentric.³⁴

Authorial intention is also very important for Greidanus' methodology because he at no point sees divine authorial intent as separate to that of the human writers' intent, i.e. by being inspired the biblical writer's represent divine intent/authorship and are effectively one-and-the-same. In claiming divine authorial intent as being equal to how Israel first heard its scriptures Greidanus keeps away from debates of possible oral traditions that may have led to a text's final formation. He is therefore only interested in the final form of the text, and for Greidanus 'how Israel heard a text' effectively concerns divine authorial intent (this will be shown subsequently in Chapter 3), i.e. it is not a claim concerning reception history at all. As a quest for authorial intent Greidanus thus rejects the idea that a text's reception history should be taken into account. The reading must be found in/from the text itself, not from what it became to mean. Therefore, his quest for authorial intent gives no room/quarter for reader response readings. The authorial role is everything, and the reader's role is primarily absorbent.

Greidanus' interaction with the Methodology of the Historical Interpreters

Greidanus begins with a look at the Church Fathers' use of allegorical and typological interpretation. However, we will move on to his use of Luther, Calvin and Vischer as it is clearly evident that these three evangelical scholars have a significant influence on the formation of Greidanus' methodology/hermeneutic for preaching.³⁵

³³ Greidanus (1999: 228).

³⁴ Greidanus (1999: 228-9).

³⁵ Greidanus' chapters 3 & 4 *The History of Preaching Christ from the Old Testament I & II* concern some work on The Apostolic fathers and Fourfold Interpretation, Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon and Vischer. Spurgeon is primarily seen as having questionable methodology yet with a correct goal, Greidanus states, 'The most valuable contribution of Spurgeon is his clear preaching of Jesus Christ' (Greidanus (1999: 159)). Luther, Calvin and Vischer not only hold to the same goal but contribute to Greidanus' methodology, being influential both positively and in reaction to negative traits. See Greidanus (1999: 69-176, esp. 111-50 & 163-76).

Luther. Greidanus affirms two main contributions by Luther for his own work. Firstly, Luther's use of Scripture with his method of expository preaching,³⁶ and secondly, his desire for a clear christological relevant application for his hearers. Greidanus states,

Luther preaches the gospel of God's grace, that is, Jesus Christ is God's gift (*sola gratia*), a gift we can receive only by faith (*sola fide*). He also insists on *sola Scriptura*, that is, the Scriptures are the only (or ultimate) norm for living and preaching, and thus he sets the Scriptures free from the denomination of church "tradition" so they can interpret themselves.³⁷

On application to the congregation Greidanus quotes Luther saying,

"It is not enough nor is it Christian, to preach the works, life, and words of Christ as historical facts, as if knowledge of these would suffice for the conduct of life... Rather ought Christ to be preached to the end that faith in him may be established, that he may not only be Christ, but be Christ for you and me, and that what his name denotes may be effectual in us."³⁸

However, not all of Luther's methodology is taken up by Greidanus. Greidanus notes, with Richard Lischer, the problems of forcing Luther's template ('stencil') of 'law and Gospel' as a methodology for exposition in regards to how Old and New Testament might be viewed (where Old Testament is Law and New Testament Gospel).³⁹ Greidanus does not accept this dialectic which brings division within the canon for he notes that 'the law is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but the effect of that fulfilment creates no dichotomy between law and Gospel.'⁴⁰

Greidanus' reading of Luther may well have hermeneutic ramifications for him. By rejecting Luther's dialectic (as he reads it) he also rejects Luther's proposal that 'ideally every sermon should proclaim first our need, with the law, and next the solution, with the gospel.'⁴¹ This position may well by

³⁶ Greidanus states, 'Luther can also be credited for what we today would call expository or textual-thematic preaching. According to Meuser, "With Luther... came what many interpreters call a totally new form of the sermon: *die schiftauslegende Predigt* [the Scripture-expositing sermon]... the aim of the sermon is ... to help hearers understand the *text*, not just as a religious truth... Its method is to take a given segment of Scripture, find the key within it, and make that unmistakably clear. The text is to control the sermon'"³⁶ (Meuser, Fred. W, 1983, *Luther the Preacher*, Minneapolis, Augsburg, p. 73, in Greidanus (1999: 124).

³⁷ Greidanus (1999: 124).

³⁸ Greidanus (1999: 124) quoting Luther from *Tractatus de libertate christiana*, as quoted by Schubert Ogden, in Ogden, Schubert M. 1982, *The Point of Christology*. San Francisco, Harper and Row, p. point xiii.

³⁹ Greidanus (1999: 126) citing Lischer in Lischer, Richard 1981, *Theology and Preaching: The Dynamics of the Gospel*, Nashville, Abingdon.

⁴⁰ Greidanus (1999: 125-6). For an alternatively view on Luther's dialectic of Law and Gospel see A.H.J. Gunneweg who demonstrates how, for Luther, Law is wider than *Torah* and Gospel – being fully canonical within this dialectic. Gunneweg, A.H.J. 1978, *Understanding the Old Testament*, London, SCM Press, pp. 51-52.

⁴¹ Greidanus (1999: 126). Further to this Greidanus notes that Luther is prone to slipping into allegory especially 'when a text [does] not yield "any other useful sense"' while also ironically Luther rejects typology

further influenced by his general desire to present a methodology that has no place for 'moralising' within it, as we shall see in the following section (moralising often being associated with law).

Calvin. For Greidanus Calvin is also a significant influence and he joins the considerable number of scholars that 'single out for approval Calvin's emphasis on historical interpretation... [i.e.] his emphasis on the intention of the author, the historical context, and the original, grammatical meaning in its literary context.'⁴² Greidanus also adds that,

In addition, we should be able to appreciate Calvin's emphasis on the unity of the Old and New Testaments in one covenant of grace... "He uses the New Testament interpretation of the Old to establish the meaning of the Old Testament text."⁴³

We also see again Greidanus affirming a theocentric approach,

Moreover, with his theocentric emphasis, Calvin is a good corrective to allegorical interpretation and excessive christological interpretation. Finally Calvin carries into modern times the ancient legitimate ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament: the ways of promise fulfilment and typology.⁴⁴

Having seen Calvin's positive contributions Greidanus does also note that ironically Calvin's theocentric approach was not always Christ centred,

Calvin... is frequently satisfied with a God centred sermon. Of course, Calvin preached in Christian Geneva, where he may have assumed that his hearers would make the connections to Christ, but this still leaves us with an inadequate model for preaching in our post-Christian culture.⁴⁵

Greidanus also notes that while Calvin's 'patristic method of explaining and applying sentence by sentence and clause by clause keeps him close to the text, in narrative texts it leads to moralistic application of dos and don'ts.'⁴⁶ In this Greidanus sees Calvin carrying forward tropological methodology from the Middle Ages due to the reformer's failure in evaluating this method 'in the light of the intention of the author... [for Greidanus asks] 'Was this moral sense the author's intention for Israel?'⁴⁷

which Greidanus affirms methodologically. Greidanus in Greidanus (1999: 126), with Bornkamm in Bornkamm, Heinrich 1969, *Luther and the Old Testament*, Philadelphia, Fortress, p. 95 (also see p. 92-95).

⁴² Greidanus (1999: 148).

⁴³ Greidanus with Puckett (Puckett, David L. 1995, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, Louisville. Westminster, p. 129-30) in Greidanus (1999: 148-9).

⁴⁴ Greidanus (1999: 149).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Greidanus (1999: 151).

⁴⁷ Greidanus (1999: 151). Greidanus here also notes that at times Calvin's preaching does still use allegory on occasion.

Greidanus' statement here regarding a tropological/moral sense is one of the prime factors of significance in him rejecting this facet of Calvin's methodology. Two points here should be considered.

Firstly, Greidanus is very much against 'moralising' in preaching. When being interviewed for the launch of his book *Preaching Christ from Daniel*⁴⁸, by Eerdmans marketing director Rachel Bamberger, Greidanus is asked 'what do you think are some common mistakes that pastors make in preaching Daniel and the other books of the Old Testament?'. His answers is as follows,

...one of the most obvious mistakes which I've been fighting ever since I wrote my dissertation is moralising... Moralising is a great danger I think, because it takes us away from the Gospel – the Gospel of grace, and the message of the text.⁴⁹

Secondly, it can be reasonably argued that a close verse-by-verse narrative approach can indeed be utilised in achieving Greidanus' hermeneutic goal of respecting both the text/narrative within its own OT setting as well as within its canonical setting as an over-arching historical redemptive meta-narrative. Such an approach does not necessarily need to be seen as 'moralising.' For example, Jo Anne Davidson holds very closely to the text verse-by-verse in a similar way to Calvin, while simultaneously holding to both the OT text and meta-narrative in an historic redemptive canonical narrative approach which does not move towards 'moralising' but to the Gospel (consistently showing atonement as present in both text and meta-narrative). She states,

During the years of dominance by the historical-critical method Biblical narratives were perceived as uneven confections of assorted myths...narratives are now increasingly appreciated as very sophisticated writing informed by particular theological presuppositions... [My] analysis of Genesis 22 illustrates this. The literary excellence of the OT writers was not devised to promote appreciation for their skills. Nor were the writers seeking merely to stroke the emotional needs of human nature. Instead, their desire was to point to the Messiah and his salvation. In fact, it can be argued substantively, as John Sailhamer and others do, that the actual details each writer includes (which are characteristic of the terse narrative style of the canon) are indicative of this.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Greidanus, Sidney 2013, *Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons*, Michigan, Eerdmans.

⁴⁹ Greidanus, Sidney 8/4/13, *Interview with Rachel Bamberger for Eerdmans* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Os78OGQEKww>, cited on 10/09/15. Greidanus states that his dissertation was published in 1970.

⁵⁰ Davidson, Jo Ann 2000, 'Abraham, Akedah and Atonement', in Moskala, Jiri, *Creation Life and Hope: Essays in Honour of Jacques B. Doukhan*, Minnesota, The OT department of the Seventh Day Adventist Seminary: Andrews University, p 49. From Davidson's article it is clear that, while she notes narrative analysis as 'a more recent discipline in theology', such an approach(es) have historically been central to biblical hermeneutics, with the modern period specifically bringing a very different approach (historical critical). Her quotation of Buber demonstrates this - 'We moderns tend to pride ourselves on our access to the sophisticated tool of

Vischer. Greidanus values Vischer's 'insistence that the Old Testament cannot be understood in isolation but must be understood in the context of the New Testament' and his 'convincing' 'use of typology.'⁵¹ However, Greidanus states that Vischer slips into what he calls Christomonism where he suggests that often Christ is preached rather than the whole council of God (as already noted). This is important in Greidanus' work for he is most adamant that he does not want to preach Christ to the detriment of the whole Godhead or the council of God (thus the necessity of preaching Jesus of Nazareth rather than Him as the 'eternal logos').

Greidanus' Christocentric Methodology

Greidanus states that his own christocentric method 'falls somewhere between Calvin's theocentric method and Luther's christological method' – thus his term 'christocentric.'⁵² He states,

The christocentric method, or, more precisely, the redemptive-historical christocentric method... complements the theocentric method of interpreting the Old Testament by seeking to do justice to the fact that God's story of bringing his kingdom on earth is centred in Christ: Christ the centre of redemptive history, Christ the centre of the Scriptures. In preaching any part of Scripture, one must understand its message in the light of that centre, Jesus Christ.⁵³

Once a text has been understood in its own setting and time, 'the way Israel heard it'⁵⁴ historically through literary, historical and theocentric perspectives 'it is at this point that questions concerning Jesus Christ the centre emerge'⁵⁵ as the interpreter moves to see the text in the context of the whole canon.⁵⁶ Greidanus thus notes that 'therefore a Christian sermon on an Old Testament text will necessarily move on to the New Testament.'

At this point the interpreter moves from asking 'What does the passage reveal about God and his will?... [to] What does this passage mean in the light of Jesus Christ?'⁵⁷ Subsequently to this Greidanus notes that the above shift of question leads to the following further question in his methodology,

comparative linguistics, religion, psychology and archaeology in dealing with biblical text. Yet we are humbled to recognise that the ancients saw all the angels, voiced all the questions and paradoxes, and emerged from the maze one step ahead of us.' See Davidson, Jo Anne (2000: 72), and Buber, Martin 1956, 'Abraham the Seer' in, *J: 5*, p. 296. Note, no reference given for John Sailhamer.

⁵¹ Greidanus (1999: 172-3).

⁵² Greidanus (1999: 227).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Greidanus (1999: 228).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Greidanus (1999: 230).

⁵⁷ Greidanus (1999: 232).

Which of the six ways we discovered in the New Testament lead to the incarnate Christ?
Redemptive-historical progression? Promise-fulfilment? Typology? Analogy?
Longitudinal Themes? Or contrast?⁵⁸

To this list, in time, Greidanus adds a seventh category – ‘The way of New Testament references.’⁵⁹ These seven themes are the possible routes that Greidanus’ christocentric method uses to make the transfer from the theocentric Old Testament message to incorporate the message of Christ and his kingdom through the primary textual theme and the text’s theocentric nature. The interpreter must apply one, or more, of these routes to preach Christ. We will look at each in turn. It should be noted that Greidanus’ seven categories for christocentric preaching have a significant overlap.

Redemptive-historical progression (RHP)

It is no surprise that as Greidanus subtitles his christocentric method as being ‘redemptive-historical’ he sees this specific method of ‘kingdom history... [as] the bedrock which supports all other ways that lead to Christ in the New Testament.’⁶⁰ His use of such a canonical ‘meta-narrative’ can be seen in the sequence of ‘Creation-Fall-Redemption-New Creation’⁶¹ which finds its ultimate goal in the New Testament. Greidanus states, ‘That goal is Jesus Messiah and ultimately the rule of God over a restored and transformed creation.’⁶² However, it should be noted that Greidanus’ meta-narrative is not only incarnational-messianic but also eschatological-messianic. Greidanus incorporates Herbert Mayer’s quotation into his own statement saying,

The whole Old Testament throbs with a strong eschatological beat. Every passage in some way or in some degree voices or echoes the message: “God is acting! God is coming! God is faithful to his covenant promises! His mercy indeed endures forever! God will not cast off His chosen people! God is preparing salvation.”⁶³

Promise-fulfilment

There is no doubt that promise-fulfilment overlaps greatly with the historic-redemptive for Christ as the goal of Old Testament Scriptures fulfils historic pre-Jesus of Nazareth prophecies that are seen as concerning Himself. Greidanus is well aware that ‘promise-fulfilment’ fell on hard times in the twentieth century as focus shifted towards source criticism which offered a clearer understanding of original and authorial meaning (though he notes this affected the academy more significantly than

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Greidanus (1999: 269).

⁶⁰ Greidanus (1999: 234).

⁶¹ Greidanus (1999: 235).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Greidanus with Herbert Mayer (Mayer, Herbert T. 1964, ‘The Old Testament in the Pulpit’, in *CTM*: 35, p. 605 cf. p. 606, in, Greidanus (1999: 237).

the church).⁶⁴ However, he has a far more dynamic approach to promise-fulfilment than asking the age old question of “how was this fulfilled in its time of authorship?,” or even, “was it fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth or will it be fulfilled from an eschatological perspective?” He states,

We should keep in mind especially two rules for interpreting Old Testament promises. First take into account that God usually fills up his promises progressively - in instalments as it were... William LaSor... writes, “Prophecy, in the sense that it reveals some part of God’s redemptive purpose, is capable of being filled, of achieving fullness, so that when it is *filled full* it is *fulfilled*... it is capable of more and more fulfilment until it is entirely fulfilled.”⁶⁵

Greidanus’ second point is that when interpreting the text one should ‘move from the promise of the Old Testament to the fulfilment in Christ and back again to the Old Testament text.’⁶⁶ By doing this the interpreter does not miss aspects of promise and hope which may be present in the Old Testament text but not fully included within the New Testament.⁶⁷

Typology

Greidanus affirms the methodology of the School of Antioch and incorporates their use of typology into his own methodology where the messianic and the historical are blended together but not with the messianic ‘floating’ above the historical.⁶⁸ In this he holds to the traditional view of a dichotomy between the Schools of Antioch (typology) and Alexandria (allegory). While recent scholarship has shown that this distinct dichotomy is questionable (in particular Frances Young)⁶⁹, the point is made – he upholds typology and rejects allegorical readings. However, such a point is not only upheld by historically supported argumentation, Greidanus also notes that that typology is shown/demonstrated in the Old Testament ‘(second Exodus, second temple)’ and came to full

⁶⁴ Greidanus (1999: 240). Prior to this Greidanus suggests that the use of ‘higher criticism’ in seminary teaching - ‘the Old Testament was studied only to recover the history of Israel’ - is one of the causes for the lack of preaching from the Old Testament today. Greidanus cites Julius Wellhausen’s resignation from Greifswald University (which was as a result of his stated inability to prepare students for the practical task of service in the Evangelical Church) to support his point. For Wellhausen acknowledges that at Greifswald he was not fulfilling this task, thus his move to Halle as professor of Semantic languages (Greidanus 1999:17-18).

⁶⁵ Greidanus (1999: 242) quoting LaSor (LaSor, William S. 1978, ‘The Messiah: An Evangelical Christian View’, in *Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation on Scripture: Theology and History*, Ed. M. H. Tanenbaum, Grand Rapids, Baker, p. 55.

⁶⁶ Greidanus (1999: 242).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Greidanus (1999: 96/7), using Ramm, Bernard 1970, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, Baker, p. 50.

⁶⁹ See Young, Frances M. 1989, ‘The Rhetorical Schools and Their Influence on Patristic Exegesis’ in, *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, Ed. Rowan Williams, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, esp. pp. 194-95.

bloom in the New Testament (especially Hebrews).⁷⁰ Importantly he notes how progressive revelation plays into his use of types and a rejection of the allegorical. Quoting Ramm he states,

An allegorist might find something far richer about Jesus Christ and salvation in Genesis than in Luke. But if progressive revelation is correctly understood such a manoeuvre by an exegete is impossible.⁷¹

It is also important to note here what a method of typology should not do, for Greidanus is keen to distance himself from 'typologising.' He states,

Negatively, typological interpretation faces the danger of degenerating into *typologizing*, that is, overextending the use of typology by searching for types in rather incidental details of the text... [e.g.] the creation of Eve from Adam's side is a type of Christ on the cross having his side pierced; the bread and wine of Melchizedek are types of the bread and wine in the Eucharist; Isaac carrying the wood up the mountain is a type of Christ carrying his cross; Joseph in the well is a type of Christ in the grave.... Typologizing, in turn can slip into allegorising. When preachers preach "types" together into an extended metaphor... allegorism comes all too easily.⁷²

While Greidanus states that 'some measure of control' is needed for typology he is not willing to hold to the idea that unless the type is used in the New Testament it is no type at all. This he says is,

...too restrictive, for there is no reason to think that the New Testament was exhaustive in citing Old Testament texts which found their fulfilment in Jesus.⁷³

For Greidanus typology should be informed by the original Old Testament text where: a) the message for Israel must be determined before looking to Christ, b) the type is central to the message of the text rather than found in peripheral detail, c) the Old Testament anti-type has certain symbolic meaning in the text, d) the differences between type and antitype should be noted and utilised with the escalation of symbolism being seen in Christ, and finally, e) lines are not simply drawn to Christ but Christ is preached through type and antitype to bring change to the lives of the congregation.⁷⁴

Analogy

Greidanus notes that 'analogy does not claim to be, strictly speaking, exegesis or interpretation of a text but [rather] is a popular method of applying the message of the Old Testament to the church today'⁷⁵ whereby it is centred 'only in Christ'⁷⁶ and is 'based on the unity of redemptive history and

⁷⁰ Greidanus (1999: 96).

⁷¹ Bernhard Ramm, in Ramm (1970: 50), quoted in Greidanus (1999: 97).

⁷² Greidanus (1999: 97).

⁷³ Greidanus (1999: 98).

⁷⁴ Greidanus (1999: 257-60).

⁷⁵ Greidanus (1999: 261-2).

⁷⁶ Greidanus (1999: 263).

the continuity between Israel and the church.⁷⁷ Here the interpreter is to ask of a text - What is God doing for Israel and therefore what is this an analogy of in terms of what Christ is doing for the church? Greidanus gives helpful examples as follows - through Jacob at Bethel (Gen 28:10-22) 'Israel learned about God's protecting... so Christ promises to be with us on our dangerous journey through life.'⁷⁸ Also, 'when preaching "Happy are those... [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord" (Ps 1), one can proclaim, "Blessed are those whose delight is in the law of Christ" Matt 5-7).'⁷⁹

Analogy for Greidanus is therefore not simply a case of saying that "this Old Testament text reminds us of something within the New" or "we can use this Old Testament text as an illustration for what in reality is a New Testament sermon." Rather, analogy is a part of the redemptive-historical nature of the meta-narrative of the canon where, while one may not be able to cite a direct quotation in the New Testament from the Old, or a definite thematic use of Old Testament text, the interpreter sees legitimate links from Old to New that reflect the radical nature of Christ's incarnation which brings about purposed redefinitions of certain themes within the canon.

Longitudinal Themes

Again while here we find much overlap with the previous headings, 'longitudinal themes,' much like 'analogy,' is a wide category. This category has much to do with the discipline of Biblical Theology. Greidanus states,

Major Old Testament themes which function as highways leading to the person, work, and teaching of Christ are the kingdom of God (reign and realm), the providence of God, covenant, the presence of God, the love of God, the grace of God, justice, redemption, law, sin and guilt offerings, God's concern for "the poor," mediator, the Day of the Lord, and so on.⁸⁰

Contrast

Using contrast as a method centres on Christ as being the juncture between differences within the Old and New Testaments where important contrasts are seen and need to be highlighted with Him as their solution and the bringer of change. Greidanus gives examples such as, circumcision no longer being the sign of the covenant, and the Sabbath changing from the seventh day of the week to the first.

⁷⁷ Greidanus (1999: 262).

⁷⁸ Greidanus (1999: 263).

⁷⁹ Greidanus (1999: 265).

⁸⁰ Greidanus (1999: 267).

The Way of New Testament References

Preaching on an Old Testament narrative, one can frequently find a New Testament reference or allusion that may serve as a link to preaching Christ.⁸¹

Here Greidanus is primarily looking for links made by the New Testament writers who cite or paraphrase Old Testament text. His examples include the possible use of Gen 22:2 found in John 3:16 as well as the use of Gen 28:10-22 in John 1:51. However, Greidanus also moves into areas where he sees that 'the reference may be more subtle,'⁸² that is, where the interpreter needs to link the texts via a wider thematic perspective. For example, he links Isaiah 50:4-11 ("The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word") with Matt 11:28 ("Come to me, all you are weary..., and I will give you rest").

Summary of Greidanus' methodology for preaching Christ from the Old Testament

In summary we can conclude the following points as being foundational regarding the christocentric methodology of Greidanus, for they are not only outlined above but they remain as constant reoccurring points throughout his work:

1. To 'preach Christ' is to preach the kingdom of God which is Good News through the whole counsel of God. This is done through Christ as understood in incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth. To do this a sizable section of text must be used rather than preaching from a singular verse or Biblical thematic heading.
2. Christ incarnate is the link between Old Testament and New for He is the fulfilment of the meta-narrative of the whole combined Christian canon where the main story concerns God's redemptive actions for Israel as outlined in both the law and the prophets.
3. An Old Testament text must be understood as the human author intended it to be where divine intention and human author are viewed as one and the same, from the perspective of God inspiring the biblical writers. However, ultimately a text must also be understood within its literary context of the entire canon. In this an Old Testament text must be seen from a New Testament historical redemptive perspective where the ancient text is assumed as having a divine purpose as a section within the meta-narrative of the one canon which has one overall narrative, one covenant and one goal who is Christ.
4. Progressive revelation of God throughout Scripture brings a considerable sanction to redemptive-historical progression and christocentric understanding of Old Testament texts in the light of the New Testament through Christ as the final revelation of God. It sanctions

⁸¹ Greidanus (1999: 271).

⁸² Greidanus (1999: 270).

interpretation of Old Testament text as it rejects suggestions of early moments of complete revelation that see Jesus of Nazareth historically appearing prior to the incarnation, or His name being used interchangeably with YHWH in the Old Testament.

5. There are seven intertwined routes to lead from Old Testament text to Christ and in each one of them He is the historic-redemptive goal and the fulfilment for the interpreter. Christ is the “who” as subject of the interpretation while the primary theme/s of the ancient text is the “how.”
6. The Interpreter does not need to be governed only by the NT writers’ use of the OT because revelation through Christ should be seen in OT texts which are not explicitly utilised by the NT writers. In this the New Testament writers’ methodology can be used to preach Christ rather than them giving a catalogue of individual texts or types to be preached with reference to Christ.

Chapter Two

Methodology for preaching Christ from the Old Testament: Abraham Kuruvilla

Abraham Kuruvilla sets out his hermeneutic in his 2013 work, *Privilege the Text: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*.¹ Therefore, here this work will be our primary reference used to gain an understanding of not only Kuruvilla's Christiconic method, but also the influences and reasoning that lie behind it.

As one might expect from such a title, Kuruvilla seeks to honour the text by remaining as close to it as possible at all times. Of course, there are different ways of reading and remaining with a text in interpretation of it, and so it is important to build an understanding of Kuruvilla's own approach.

Kuruvilla's term 'Christiconic' is unique. This is because it is not easy to define his hermeneutic in familiar or classic terms (such as HR). Therefore, it is helpful suggest a working definition to establish some initial understanding of Kuruvilla's methodological direction and concerns.

The 'Christiconic method' may be described as a method that seeks to remain with the text at all times - to establish its theology. This theology is subsequently applied, as divine demand, in the life of the believer through their obedience.

Kuruvilla's reading rules

Kuruvilla starts with a set of assumptive reading rules that foundationally underpin his method. In citing his rules for reading Kuruvilla appeals directly to Christian tradition, stating:

The six rules of reading that have found widespread acceptance amongst Christians throughout the church age are: the Rules of Exclusivity, Singularity, Finality, Applicability, Ecclesiality, and Centrality.²

These rules in short description, and in Kuruvilla's own words, are as follows:

- 1) Rule of Exclusivity. The Rule of Exclusivity demarcates those canonical books that alone may be utilised for applicational purposes.³
- 2) Rule of Singularity. The Rule of Singularity calls the interpreter to consider text as a singular unit for applicational purposes – an integral whole, intrinsically related in all its parts.⁴
- 3) Rule of Finality. The Rule of Finality affirms that the final form of the canonical text should be considered the object of interpretation for applicational purposes.⁵

¹ Kuruvilla (2013).

² Kuruvilla (2013: 68).

³ Kuruvilla (2013: 68).

⁴ Kuruvilla (2013: 71).

⁵ Kuruvilla (2013: 76).

- 4) Rule of Applicability. The Rule of Applicability asserts that every text in the canonical Scriptures may be utilised for applicational purposes by the church universal.⁶
- 5) 'Rule of Ecclesiology. The Rule of Ecclesiology obligates the reading of Scripture for applicational purposes to be conducted under the auspices of the community that recognizes canonicity.⁷
- 6) Rule of Centrality. The Rule of Centrality focuses the interpretation of canonical texts for applicational purposes upon the pre-eminent person of Christ and his redemptive work that fulfils the will of the Father in the power of the Spirit.⁸

Kuruvilla states that 'the rules proposed here... are more like rules of thumb, than like inviolate and unassailable rules of nature. That is, they are more descriptive than prescriptive.'⁹ However, this does not mean that they are vague or on occasion dispensed with. He holds to all six rules with impressive consistency. Kuruvilla states,

The rules are essentially statements of reading habits that govern the interpretation of this special text... In terms of the function of these rules, their broad scope necessarily limits them to the role of guardians: the interpreter must not cross the boundaries laid down by these rules; rather he or she must operate within them. In other words, these rules oversee and superintend the hermeneutic operation without defining how precisely a specific text may be interpreted. The particularities of a text are not elucidated by the application of these rules.¹⁰

Systematisation and Fragmentation: their failure noted, their 'spirit' upheld

Subsequent to stating his assumptive reading rules, Kuruvilla sets out by discussing how he sees the interplay between doctrine and hermeneutics in preaching as he notes that often text is interpreted with doctrinal influence to the extent that effectively, we could say, doctrine becomes a special hermeneutic lens by which the text is interpretively viewed (subsequently to some facet within the text itself having already suggested which doctrine forms the lens).¹¹ Kuruvilla states,

There is systematisation, by which all that is endeavoured is an attempt to squeeze a given pericope into the appropriate pigeonhole of systematic theology, by organizing facts and by systematising detail. The healing of the blind man in Mark 8 must fit into the omnipotence of God/Jesus (theology proper). The story of Abraham's (non-) sacrifice of Isaac must accommodate substitutionary atonement (soteriology) and, perhaps, the love of God in that "he gave his only begotten Son." Second Samuel 11-12 (the account of David and Bathsheba) ought to remind us of the depravity of mankind (hamartiology) and the perfect messianic King (Christology) ... Such systematisation is

⁶ Kuruvilla (2013: 79).

⁷ Kuruvilla (2013:82).

⁸ Kuruvilla (2013: 84).

⁹ Kuruvilla (2013: 65).

¹⁰ Kuruvilla (2023: 66).

¹¹ Using the terms and category of 'special hermeneutics' here as Kuruvilla does for 'Christ centred readings,' i.e. reading the text through a specific idea or concept external to the text itself, this would also in theory include categories such as post-colonial or feminist readings. 'General hermeneutics' on the other hand is used to denote interpretation that utilises only the specific text without an outside concept or idea being brought to bear upon the text. See Kuruvilla (2013: 31-64, 65-86).

essentially generalization carried far beyond the terra firma of the text; the specificity of the texts is lost in favour of the generalities of systematised axioms.¹²

Kuruville also notes that interpreters who 'have graduated beyond [such] systematisation' often fall into a further problematic and opposite category by 'atomising' the text. This he descriptively notes as being the 'willy-nilly ransacking of the Bible for usable scraps.'¹³ He states,

Atomizers... react to the deficiencies of systematisation, and attempt to make application out of every tidbit of textual material. A shotgun style of exegesis that chases every rabbit in every burrow is complimented by an equally shotgun mode of homiletics – atomisation. No byte is unbitten.¹⁴

However, though Kuruville finds these two approaches to be largely at fault in their execution of interpretation he does accept that the 'spirit' of both categories has some methodological purpose in terms of intention. Regarding systematisation:

I agree with systematisation in that some degree of generalization is necessary so that specifics of the pericope do not paralyse the effort to recontextualise its truths to an audience far away in space and time. For instance, ancient "wine" in "do not be drunk with wine" (Eph 5:18) must be generalized to "alcohol" to prevent intoxication with modern vodka or whiskey... Equally important is the role of systematisation in constituting a rule of faith for reading scripture; this rule forms the interpretive boundaries that may not be encroached.¹⁵

While Kuruville states here that he accepts some systematisation, no reference in his work is to be found concerning any use of systematic Christian doctrine. That said, some use of 'generalisation' does occur as transhistorically intended widening of the distanced narrow ancient text which leads to recontextualisation in terms of textual specifics. It is such 'generalisation' that is evident in his methodological praxis (rather than any obvious statement concerning the use of doctrine) and indeed, his example above shows how he recontextualises 'wine' as 'modern alcoholic drink' (moving in transhistorical intention from an ancient textual specific to a generalisation for today). However, this of course owes nothing to systematic doctrine as it is a move of generalisation rather than one that employs constructs of biblical theology or systematic doctrine.

While Kuruville, like Greidanus, rejects atomisation of the text (which might be summed up in Greidanus' terms as leading to extra-textual allegory or typologising for application purposes from minor textual details) he upholds its intention in terms of application. He states,

¹² Kuruville (2013: 21).

¹³ Kuruville (2013: 23).

¹⁴ Kuruville (2013:22).

¹⁵ Kuruville (2013: 23).

I... agree with the burden of atomisation, that application *must* be made in every sermon: lives must change in response to every pericope of Scripture, every week.¹⁶

Having noted how Kuruvilla underlines the importance of application here, it should be noted that he rejects the common/regular usage of systematisation and atomising primarily because neither ‘attends to the trajectory of the particular text (what the author is *doing* with what he is saying).’¹⁷ This authorial role is a central facet of Kuruvilla’s methodology and the purpose and intention of the author should not be set aside for reading doctrinally, fragmentally (atomising), or indeed against the natural flow of the text (i.e. reading against the traditional concept of reading with a discerned authorial intent/spirit of the text as opposed to forming subversive readings).¹⁸ However, while holding to authorial intent as desirable, Kuruvilla does note that the present day interpreter’s role must be held in tension with this due to the nature of distancing. Kuruvilla states,

The liberation of content from communication event, accomplished in the event of writing, proclaims the escape of the text’s career from the finite horizons of the author. This, however, does not imply a total loss of tethering of the text to authorial meaning, or that readers have to throw up their hands in despair. Though there is in writing some degree of freedom of text from author, it is not a complete severance that would make authorial guidance totally unavailable for interpretation. Distancing does not render the text utterly autonomous, for the text bears with it, to some extent at least, artefacts of the event of writing and traces of the author in its script, medium, content, arrangement, etc... Therefore the fallacy of baptising the text as an authorless, absolute entity, detached and completely bereft of any authorial vestige, must be avoided. In other words despite distancing, authorial fingerprints can be detected in the inscription; such residues of intent are essential for interpretation, and are sufficiently present in texts to establish the writer’s purpose.¹⁹

Kuruvilla continues as he notes the ‘living ability’ of the text beyond its origins of scripting and thus its transhistorical nature,

In the visual world of the text, receivers of the discourse are no longer hearers; they have been turned into readers, for text has escaped not only the author, but those within earshot, and it is now rendered accessible to reading audiences situated anywhere and anytime. The unique nature of writing gives it the ability to reach receivers other than those originally intended by the author.²⁰

For Kuruvilla, as for Greidanus, divine and human authorship are effectively handled as one and the same. Kuruvilla notes, ‘for the purposes of this work, I do not make any particular distinction between the intentions of these two parties, divine and human. When referring to one, I will be

¹⁶ Kuruvilla (2013: 23).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See Kuruvilla (2013: 12-15, esp. 15) with regards to subversive readings (Kant, Said R. Aha, and Woody Allen).

¹⁹ Kuruvilla (2013: 35-36).

²⁰ Kuruvilla (2013: 36-37).

referring to the other as well.²¹ Such an approach of course places a very significant weight on the ‘shoulders’ of the interpreter to discern authorial intent and thus the voice/message of God. This is the universal importance of the preacher’s task. However, the gravity of this becomes more critical when one notes that for Kuruvilla there is one only one right reading of any given pericope. In this he gives no suggestion that the same text might yield different interpretations at different times or locations.²² Therefore, for Kuruvilla the ‘living sense’ of a text comes through the ability of a text to communicate today (transhistorically intended in distanciation from the writing event) rather than being able to communicate a variety of interpretations in new and different ways and times in the life of a believer and church.

Kuruvilla on General Hermeneutics

Kuruvilla’s methodology presupposes that all biblical texts have an authorially (divine/human) intended theological hermeneutic, and he expounds the need for such a hermeneutic which he notes as ‘sorely lacking’²³, thus his own contribution,

As a nascent field (or at least, as a nascent *label*) “theological interpretation of Scripture” remains quite undefined with a number of variant approaches to this critical hermeneutic operation. This work, however, adopts a unique approach to theological hermeneutics. The vantage point of this entire offering is the pulpit, so to speak, not the desk of the Bible scholar or the lectern of the systematic theologian. In other words, the “theology” of this *theological* hermeneutic is not biblical or systematic theology. Rather, sustaining the focus on preaching, the theology employed is that of the pericope...: what the author is *doing* with what he is *saying* in the specific pericope chosen for the sermon. What in this unit of text of preaching is intended to change the lives of listeners for the glory of God?²⁴

One might ask how such an interpretation that is based in praxis plays out in reality, and Kuruvilla states that it is Augustine’s construct of a ‘duality of hermeneutics and rhetoric [which is] foundational to the rest of [his] work.’²⁵ Kuruvilla re-phrases Augustine’s duality as he blends this with the concept of transhistorical intention stating that, ‘integral to any preaching endeavour is respect for the ancient text, as well as relevance for the modern audience.’²⁶ It is therefore most important that Kuruvilla’s work should be seen as an unbending commitment to see the pulpit as the

²¹ Kuruvilla (2013: 33, ft. 8).

²² Any differences would come from the individual preacher’s own choice of illustrations to support the theology of the pericope only.

²³ Kuruvilla (2013: 25).

²⁴ Kuruvilla (2013: 25).

²⁵ Kuruvilla utilises *De Doctrina Christiana* (books 1-3) as he follows Augustine’s construct of *modus inveniendi* (hermeneutics and *modus proferendi* (rhetoric), see ft. 17 in Kuruvilla (2013: 25).

²⁶ Kuruvilla (2013: 25).

melting pot where the hermeneutics and rhetoric must meld and work together as the interpreter moves from text to praxis.²⁷

However, concerning such a singular goal in methodology one is drawn to ask if the move to find a 'theological hermeneutic' is practically applicable for every Biblical text/pericope. For example, 1 Chronicles 1-9 seems more concerned with 'the historical' and HR rather than 'the theological' within individual pericopes. Sara Japhet states,

In the framework of I Chron. 1-9, the chronistic representation of the entire history of Israel prior to David (or to the death of Saul), I Chron. 1 represents the book of Genesis, from which all its material is taken.²⁸

However, Japhet states that it is in the climactic ending of this section in I Chronicles 10: 13-14 that it is the lineage to the Davidic throne that brings a theological element to the historical nature of the preceding chapters.²⁹ It is such a theological focus that is indeed the target of the Chronicler's opening genealogies. Steven S. Tuell states,

David and his line are the centre and climax of the genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1-9. Although the Chronicler paints on a worldwide canvas, his focus never wavers from the line of David.³⁰

This section of text could therefore legitimately be interpreted theologically with a sense of 'Historical Redemptive Progression,' as noted by Tuell and using Greidanus' methodology which focuses on God's saving plan and purpose in His ongoing covenant relationship with Israel. However, for Kuruvilla making the HR move beyond David to Christ is not an option (as we will see), because he rejects the kind of Historic Redemptive methodology that Greidanus utilises even though the passage could be seen as demanding it. This would leave him with an historical text section that he seeks to understand theologically. It is most difficult to see how in such a genre this might be achieved without viewing the text via a wider canonical HR system (which he would apparently

²⁷ Kuruvilla favours John Webster's suggestion that 'The most fruitful way of engaging in theological interpretation of Scripture is to do it... We do not need more by the way of prolegomena to exegesis, we do need more exegesis.' (Webster, John 2010, 'Editorial', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12: pp. 116-17. He also notes the voices of R.W.L. Moberly, Hans W. Frei and Miroslav Volf concerning the lack of movement from theology to praxis. See Kuruvilla (2013: 26, ft. 20 & 22).

²⁸ Japhet, Sara 1993, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, London, SCM Press, p. 52.

²⁹ Japhet (1993: 229).

³⁰ Tuell, Steven S. 1989, *First and Second Chronicles: Interpretation – A Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Louisville, Library of Congress, p. 18. See also, Klein, Ralph W. 2006, *1 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, p. 291. Here Klein notes the 'change of kingship [to be] as momentous for the Chronicler as the change from the age of the united monarchy under David and Solomon to the divided monarchy thereafter. Both of them were a "turn of affairs" brought about by God (2 Chron. 10:15). Klein notes the change to be of such consequence (which he states as played down by Japhet) because the Chronicler moves from 'Saul, who failed, to David whose kingdom would be established forever', in Klein, *1 Chronicles* (2006: 291). It is such a move (to the kingdom forever) that brings with it the HR move to Christ for the Christian preacher.

decline to do). Japhet's suggestion of a theological interpretation is also in reality exactly the sort of theological interpretation that Kuruvilla does not accept for it finds no real purchase of application, for one must ask what is meant by a theology of a Davidic line outside of Christ.³¹ It is hard to see how he could utilise such a Davidic historical genealogy with his method and find a practical application only through an unrealised Davidic line that stops. One suspects that such a lineage would remain historical only, looking backwards to OT references that lead to this text for interpretation (e.g. like Genesis) rather than theologically beyond the Chronicles towards Christ.

Kuruvilla's Barthian move: A big statement of limited consequence

The 'living ability' of the text is only possible for Kuruvilla by the text having a divine purpose and author and he applies a Barthian type move where the general hermeneutics of a text are said to be governed by the Christocentric special hermeneutic,

God is the ultimate Cause (Author), enabling every other meaningful discourse about referents; and he is the ultimate Authority, from whom is derived every other authority that beckons us to respond. In effect, then, every book is to be read as the Bible is – seeking authorial intent, comprehending textual referent, and responding to its overtures. The reading of the Bible is the paradigm for every other kind of reading that respects author, privileges content, and applies truth. In other words general hermeneutics exists because there exists a special hermeneutic – the construal of Scripture as the *viva vox Dei* ("living voice of God"). Special hermeneutics is, thus, one of a kind, not just a plot in a larger terrain of general hermeneutics. Indeed it is the other way around: "general hermeneutics is inescapably theological."³²

Such a Barthian style of move might be expected to re-orientate, and thus inform, the interpretational reading via a perspective shift which brings a radically different and inverted view, where the Christocentric 'special hermeneutic' governs and speaks into the 'general' hermeneutic. However, while Kuruvilla states the above move quoted, in practice this argument remains a suggestive point concerning the goal of the preaching behind his working method only, as practically it does not affect his general hermeneutic methodology at all. This is because methodologically Kuruvilla always seeks to move from a general hermeneutic that views the Old Testament text in isolation before moving to a special Christocentric hermeneutic (as is the intention of Greidanus also). He states,

This subjection of general to special hermeneutics does not mean that one can dispense with the former. After all, the Bible is text, albeit like no other. But a text it remains, and the interpreter must resort to general hermeneutics in its interpretation.³³

³¹ Davidic hope, or messianic redemption, could possibly be alluded to by Japhet here. See Kuruvilla (2013: 26) on 'biblical interpretation' that must find purchase in application.

³² Kuruvilla (2013: 32-33).

³³ Kuruvilla (2013: 33).

Expository Preaching

When Kuruvilla interprets the text his aim is to do so with a section of text that is a sizable and workable pericope.³⁴ Here we find that Kuruvilla and Greidanus are indeed a fitting comparison as both concern themselves only with expository preaching of a textual unit of a chapter or multi-verse section (as we have seen Greidanus outline from Luther's influence). Neither scholar looks at preaching that is thematic, topical, or which expounds singular verses or phrases. Defining both the pericope and its function Kuruvilla states,

Pericopes are not merely conveniently packaged textual units suitable for weekly uptake. Their self contained and defined nature, their potential use in *lectio continua* fashion, and their regular periodic employment in church assemblies for application, all render them as agents of a unique and momentous phenomenon that serves to align the faithful with their God: this is the theological function of pericopes.³⁵

Special Hermeneutics: Kuruvilla's Christiconic Method

Having established the theological meaning of an OT text on its own Kuruvilla then applies this meaning through his 'special hermeneutic' where the 'general hermeneutic' governs the special totally, and thus the 'special' functions only as an application of the 'general hermeneutic.' In so doing, Kuruvilla rejects the classic/traditional historic redemptive approach of Greidanus and contends against a number of scholars who uphold similar HR thinking (including Vern S. Poythress, Edmund P. Clowney and Don Carson).³⁶ Kuruvilla neither uses nor agrees with the following common facets of Christocentric methodology: 1) HR in general and its use in linking the canon from Old to New Testament with a meta-narrative, 2) Apostolic preaching from NT sermons, 3) The use of Old Testament Christocentric typology as found in the NT, 4) The use of Luke 24 for forming a Christocentric preaching method for use with OT texts, 5) The use of 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2 to establish that it is only 'Christ and Him crucified' that should be preached at all times. As Greidanus positively supports/uses all five of these approaches it is helpful to note each of Kuruvilla's objections briefly in turn, as such objections are catalysts for him in terms of presenting his own hermeneutic.

1) HR in general and OT to NT meta-narrative

Concerning the approach of Greidanus, Kuruvilla states,

Greidanus' solution is for preachers to "interpret the Old Testament in the light of its fulfilment in the New Testament." The potential problem with this approach is that

³⁴ Kuruvilla has written extensively on the use of pericopes / 'pericope theology'. See Kuruvilla (2009).

³⁵ Kuruvilla (2013: 95-6).

³⁶ See Kuruvilla (2013: 239).

specific thrusts of individual OT texts may get neglected in the rush to correlate the OT with the NT, making the value of preaching from the OT doubtful, at best.³⁷

It is specifically the possibility of losing (partially or fully) the message of the individual OT text that Kuruvilla seeks to avoid in his method as he aims to privilege the individuality of each pericope of Scripture. He also sees similar problems with Carson's method regarding the use of canonical biblical theology. For Kuruvilla, this effectively falls under 'systematisation' with his concerns that system and canonical meta-narrative sits above the individual text in interpretational governance. Kuruvilla states,

For Carson, christocentric preaching is based upon "strong biblical theology" that comes from examining the canonical interweaving threads of ideas, tracking such biblical themes as kingdom, priesthood, temple or sacrifice. According to him there are roughly twenty such broad canonical themes that enable the preacher to trace Christ from any text, "without making a wild leap."³⁸ Biblical theology does help place the particular event of a narrative pericope against the backdrop of God's deeds in history, and there is, of course a place for this in the teaching program of the church. The contention of this work, however, is that the sermon is not the place for such a display; rather, preaching is the event where the specific message of a particular text - its divine demand - is expounded and brought to bear upon the life of the children of God to transform them for the glory of God. If the preacher relates every text every Sunday to the larger theme of redemption, or perhaps to the even broader theme of the glory of God, it reduces preaching to painting big pictures every week - the same twenty odd vistas recommended by Carson. In such biblical-theology transactions, the specifics of the pericope being preached - the miniatures - tend to get swallowed up in the canvas of RH interpretation.³⁹

Here we can see that not only does Kuruvilla define preaching in a particular way (as teaching divine demand from an individual pericope and not as teaching wider doctrine, thematics and systematics) he is making the opposing assumption to Greidanus, i.e. that the message of each individual pericope is not HR/RHP as a smaller part of a greater whole. Both theologians clearly derive their approach to preaching from these opposing positions. Kuruvilla's position certainly simplifies things for the interpreter, for it is not as easy to remain focused on both the individual details of a picture as well as the overall landscape simultaneously. However, one must ask, 'what in reality it means to uphold biblical theology and its teaching in the life of the church and yet not within preaching?' For in this Kuruvilla holds a very specific view of what might be called 'preaching', and what cannot, and he effectively requires different categories for: teaching biblical theology, doctrine and evangelistic

³⁷ Kuruvilla (2013: 239), citing Greidanus (1989: 119).

³⁸ Quoting, Carson D.A., 'Of First Importance (part 1): Eight Words that Help Us Preach the Gospel Correctly' from, www.preachingtoday.co/skills/themes/gettinggospelright/offirstimportance1.html, cited on 3/6/12 by Kuruvilla, checked as active on 13/9/15.

³⁹ Kuruvilla (2013: 240).

proclamation. This leads us on to his reasons for rejecting hermeneutic models based on apostolic preaching.

2) Apostolic preaching

Kuruvilla also rejects outright what is often termed as apostolic preaching, i.e. a model of preaching based on the preaching methodology of the apostles in the New Testament. He states that,

It is often claimed that the pattern of apostolic preaching validates a christocentric approach: the apostles were “consistently preaching the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰ While this may certainly be true of most (though not all) of the recorded sermons available to us in the NT, one should be careful about creating a comprehensive apostolic hermeneutic model out of scant data. The sermons we have in the NT are but few in number, and all of them, without exception, are evangelistic – of course, they would be presenting the gospel: “the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.”⁴¹

3) NT typology from OT Characters

Typology will be discussed in more detail regarding Kuruvilla in chapter 4. Briefly it should be stated that Kuruvilla does not use OT types as shown in the NT because he does not take NT texts for OT interpretation into account. However, in support of his hermeneutic of ‘divine demand’ he uses the NT to argue for a moral typology and ‘exemplars galore’, saying,

Jesus frequently exhorted his listeners to imitate characters in his stories and parables: for example, the wise builder (Matt 7:24-27), David (Mark 2:23-28), and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37... - “Go and do the same”).⁴²

It should be noted that, while Kuruvilla rejects the use of Christocentric typology (from OT characters), his ‘theology of the pericope’ effectively establishes a type of Christ which is to be applied as ‘Christ-likeness.’

4) Luke 24 as method

Kuruvilla also rejects the commonly presented idea that Luke 24:13-27, 44-48 presents a methodology given by Christ for use in interpreting the OT as concerning Himself being in every single text. He states, ‘It is hard to defend a stance that locates Christ in every word, verse, and story, without the interpreter engaging in some hermeneutic acrobatics.’⁴³

⁴⁰ Kuruvilla (2013: 246) quoting, Mohler, R. Albert, 2008, *He is not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World*, Chicago, Moody, p. 21.

⁴¹ Kuruvilla (2013: 246). Kuruvilla problematically clarifies why ‘not all’, see section 5 below.

⁴² Kuruvilla (2013: 242).

⁴³ Kuruvilla (2013: 248). Kuruvilla in this case is arguing against Mohler and Clowney in particular. Mohler states that ‘From Moses to the prophets, He is the focus of every single word in the Bible. Every verse of Scripture finds its fulfilment in Him’ (Mohler (2008: 96)). Clowney claims the Luke 24 text to be ‘one that

Kuruville's conclusion on Luke 24 is that "'Moses and all the Prophets" is equated with "all the Scriptures"' (24:27 which he parallels with 24:44) and that therefore Christ effectively presents 'a broad reference to... [Scripture's] various parts, primarily the major divisions: Law, Prophets, and Psalms (writings).'⁴⁵ Kuruville also supports this by noting that 'in 24:27, Jesus mentions only matters from the OT that actually concern Himself... so also in 24:4... "all things which are written about me."'⁴⁶ However, while Kuruville's reading of the text and the original Greek is reasonable this is only one way of interpreting it as the text remains ambiguous.

By way of contrast with Kuruville, concerning Luke 24 Greidanus states,

Jesus believed that Moses and all the prophets bore witness to him, the incarnate Christ. How, then, was Jesus present in the Old Testament centuries before he was born? He was "present" basically as promise. The concept of "promise" turns out to be much broader, however, than the predictions in a few messianic prophecies. In his last "sermon" in Luke (24:44-49), Jesus says, "... everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Notice, Jesus refers to the three main sections of the Old Testament; not just a few prophecies but the whole Old Testament speaks of Jesus Christ. And what does it reveal about Jesus? At minimum, it speaks of his suffering, his resurrection and his teaching. Jesus says. "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third days, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." In John 5:39, similarly, we hear Jesus say to the Jews, "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf [about me, NIV]." Not just a few isolated messianic prophecies, but the whole Old Testament bears witness to Jesus.⁴⁷

Clearly here we see that scholars are divided and that there are two different reasonable ways of reading Luke 24. It is of no surprise that those who support an HR method see the passage as setting up a methodology, while scholars such as Kuruville, who do not hold to an HR method, do not.

It should be noted that, while Kuruville admits that indeed Christ is referring to broad sections of the OT canon in Luke 24:27, his methodology actually does not support the inclusion of any individual instances of texts concerning Christ. Even though Christ says of Isaiah 61:1-2, in Luke 4:16-21, that "Today this Scripture has been *fulfilled* in your hearing", this OT text cannot be preached using Kuruville's methodology as concerning Christ (only Christ-likeness built from the theology of the Isaiah 61 pericope). This remains the case even though reasonably Isaiah 61:1-2 is shown to be one

unlocks the use of Old Testament by the New'. See Clowney, Edmund P. 1986, 'The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century', in *PR*, Phillipsburgh, pp. 163-91, esp. 164.

⁴⁴ Kuruville (2013: 249).

⁴⁵ Kuruville (2013: 248).

⁴⁶ Kuruville (2013: 250).

⁴⁷ Greidanus (1999: 56).

such individual OT instance that Christ is clearly referring to, for his declaration in Luke 4: 21 appears in the same work as His overarching statement in Luke 24:27.

5) Corinthians – preaching ‘Christ crucified’

A further common idea that Kuruvilla does not support is the use of 1 Corinthians 1:22-23; 2:2 and 2 Corinthians 4:5 where Paul states that he came to the Corinthian church knowing nothing but Christ and Him crucified/ and proclaiming Him as such. Kuruvilla again sees this as concerning evangelistic proclamation, and because his hermeneutic for preaching does not incorporate proclamation he does not therefore see this as apt in terms of forming a methodology. However, such a position may not be certain because, concerning 1 Corinthians 2:2, Paul is talking about what he was proclaiming ‘among you’, i.e. within the context of the church. This may not necessarily concern evangelism at all, for it is said within the context of resolving divisions using godly wisdom rather than that of the rhetorical sophist.⁴⁸ Indeed Paul himself may well be using subversive rhetoric here to counter the arrogance of the Corinthians who have formed factions through their ‘puffed up’ disposition (1 Corinthians 4:18, 5:2). However, rhetorical argumentation itself may indeed be good reason to call into question whether Paul’s claims here concerning preaching/known Christ and Him crucified only are a sound foundation for a preaching hermeneutic.⁴⁹ For if he is using heavy subversive rhetoric his statements are therefore contextually very specific as he argues for unity through humility with preaching methodology far from his radar.⁵⁰

Kuruvilla’s Method in Outline

With such a radical methodological departure away from a number of well-trodden paths within Christian preaching tradition Kuruvilla’s Christiconic method is intriguing indeed. His approach is simply to apply the interpreted theology of the pericope to the life of the church and believer by teaching this theological interpretation as divine demand. This moral divine demand must be obeyed by the believer. In obeying such demand the believer is presented with what it means to be Christ-like. This is Kuruvilla’s ‘Christiconic interpretation’ and the move to Christ is simply as stated, i.e. the

⁴⁸ For more see, Garland, David E. 2003, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, pp. 82-84.

⁴⁹ With reference to, Litfin, Duane 2015, ‘The Hazards of Rhetoric’, *Paul’s Theology of Preaching: The Apostle’s Challenge to the Art of Persuasion in Ancient Corinth*, Illinois, IVP Academic, pp. 107.

⁵⁰ On defence of this point Kuruvilla states that regarding Paul’s recorded sermons ‘At least in the one delivered on Mars Hill (Acts 17: 22-31, and , perhaps... Acts 14:8-18), neither Jesus nor the cross is mentioned.’ However, this latter example can hardly be considered a complete sermon. Concerning Acts 17, while Jesus or the cross are not named as such at Mars Hill, repentance is preached (17:30) and judgment ‘by a man whom [God] has appointed... giv[ing] assurance to all by raising him from the dead’ – this does seem to clearly suggest that Jesus was preached as well as His resurrection (an intrinsic facet of Christian atonement (1 Cor. 15:17)). See Kuruvilla (2013: 251).

interpreted theology of the pericope presents what it means to be like Christ as a combined move which incorporates both Kuruvilla's 'rule of centrality,' and application for the Christian to follow in obedience each week.

Once one has determined the theology of the pericope this forms a straight forward method which is tractable and thus repeatable with ease. While this is simple at face value, its radical rejection of the more traditional HR approach that we have seen leaves much for debate. We will unpack Kuruvilla's Christonic hermeneutic further and view the underpinning of his special hermeneutic suggestion in detail, as there is much behind his movement to Christ-likeness.

Sanctification: Kuruvilla's goal in preaching

For Kuruvilla the whole point of preaching is the sanctification of Christian listeners – to become like Christ. He states,

Week by week, pericope by pericope, sermon by sermon, the community of God is progressively and increasingly (re)oriented to the will of God, gradually implementing covenant renewal.⁵¹

In Kuruvilla there is great emphasis on the 'week by week' power of a sermon for transformation for the community of saints.⁵² There is also significant emphasis on 'covenant renewal' by the believer through listening and responding to the preaching of divine demand. He states,

Covenant renewal is thus accomplished in the church as she submits to divine demand. The task of the preacher is therefore one of great consequence for the community of God's people.⁵³

Kuruvilla actually states that individual pericopes are 'literary instruments of covenant renewal'⁵⁴ and it is via the theology of each pericope that the believer is able to live out the demonstrated *imago Dei* in obedience. The restored image of God in men and women is Kuruvilla's whole focus and purpose for preaching and he defines this early on as a part of his reading rule of centrality,

This rule subsumes under its aegis all the discourses in the canon, for the communicative action of Scripture is geared towards achieving this goal of restoring the *imago Dei* in man. In fact, what the canon is doing is offering a theological description of Jesus Christ and Christlikeness; this is the context of the world in front of the text, a picture of the perfect Man.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Kuruvilla (2013: 113).

⁵² Kuruvilla (2013: 113, 114, 116).

⁵³ Kuruvilla (2013: 148).

⁵⁴ Kuruvilla (2013: 99).

⁵⁵ Kuruvilla (2013: 85).

When reading Kuruvilla's language of 'covenant renewal' there is a sense that this phraseology might be felt as jarring to some evangelical readers. Traditionally, evangelicals have often seen 'covenant renewal' as primarily being a directive of God Himself, and specifically through the cross, with the individual being a covenant keeper responding to God as the superior covenant party. However, Kuruvilla is not talking of 'the new covenant'. He is simply bringing a weightier emphasis on the idea that each week the Christian must make a decision to obey God's directives and follow him. In so doing, it should be noted that Kuruvilla is incorporating into his hermeneutic a classic Jewish understanding of one's/Israel's own responsibility in covenant renewal/keeping. This as a continuation of a classic Jewish idea of covenant (as noted by Levenson)⁵⁶ is a most important part of Kuruvilla's methodology (along with the continuation of OT law, as we shall see).

With justification/evangelism not being a part of his focus on 'week by week' obedience, Kuruvilla makes himself clear regarding sanctification saying that 'all such divine demand is rightly considered post-salvific.'⁵⁷ He also notes that he draws this from Old Testament Laws which 'are not criteria for salvation, but are guidelines for sanctification.'⁵⁸ In this he is clearly saying that response to divine demand should never be considered as meritable for salvation in any way. He is also quick to clarify his position as not concerning legalism. He states,

By construing the Torah as a code of human performance and duty for gaining some sort of justificatory merit with God, Israel missed its thrust as a divine guide to sanctification to be obeyed in faith.⁵⁹

It is quite likely that with time, what God had intended to be guidelines for sanctification became misconstrued as means for salvation.⁶⁰

Unlike legalism – merit-seeking works, attempted with one's own resources, for God's own glory – obedience of faith is dependant upon God's own grace, for it recognises that only through the power of the Spirit can obedience to divine demand be possible or pleasing to God.⁶¹

Here we see again Kuruvilla's weight on the obedience of the believer, their faith and the power of the Spirit to carry out divine demand. Sanctification is by God who enables human obedience. He also adds that,

Such obedience also acknowledges that failures do occur, and joyfully accepts forgiveness offered through Jesus Christ. In sum, this theological hermeneutic of biblical law (and indeed divine demand everywhere in Scripture) rests upon God's gracious

⁵⁶ Levenson, Jon D. 1987, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*, San Francisco, Harper, pp. 80-86.

⁵⁷ Kuruvilla (2013: 202).

⁵⁸ Kuruvilla (2013: 153).

⁵⁹ Kuruvilla (2013: 270).

⁶⁰ Kuruvilla (2013: 162).

⁶¹ Kuruvilla (2013: 152).

provision through the Son and an equally gracious operation through the Spirit, while exhorting believers to fulfil their gracious Christian responsibility to meet divine demand and thereby be as holy as God himself is holy.⁶²

Kuruvilla holds to a balance here in that God's forgiveness is available for when divine demand is not met in faith and through the Spirit's empowering. Yet, in practice application of the above quotation is a rarity in his work and repentance is not the central thrust of Kuruvilla's methodology or his preached sermons.⁶³ His focus is sanctification, rather than justification/proclamation. He thus tends towards speaking of the believer's alignment with God's demands rather than a language of specific repentance.

Kuruvilla on Law

Kuruvilla fully upholds the Law as being still in operation for the people of God today, albeit theologically. For Kuruvilla, that the Law is no longer kept as a set of practical demands is a function of distancing rather than because of transhistorical intention of the Divine which declares Christ as the completion of the Law - its *telos*.⁶⁴ Kuruvilla states,

In sum, law continues to operate, with the caveat that it be interpreted theologically, in light of the immense textual shift that has occurred between the writing of the law and its modern-day reading. In so interpreting law for application, the people of God learn about the world in front of the legal text that depicts God and his relationship with his creation, and how they can inhabit that world – i.e. abide by divine demand.⁶⁵

Kuruvilla is not primarily saying that because Christ fulfilled the Law physically in his life, the Law now only applies theologically, and he is a careful scholar who covers his bases outside of his primary methodological focus. He states,

...in brief, it might be stated here that the *telos* of the law, Jesus Christ is its perfect embodiment, the one "who committed no sin" (1Pet 2:22; also 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15); in his absolute obedience, he was also the only one who could pay the price for mankind's transgression of law (Heb 9:28; 1 Pet 2:24; etc). Having done so, he made possible the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that now empowers the child of God to keep the law (Rom 8:1-17).⁶⁶

Such a statement is not the main thrust of his argument because, as Christ does not 'nullify' the Law, focus on Christ's perfect life as of atoning value is not prevalent. Indeed Christ's life-lived falls more into the category of an example to be followed rather than an important facet of atonement

⁶² Kuruvilla (2013: 153).

⁶³ See Kuruvilla, Abraham, *General Sermons*, Dallas Theological Seminary website, <http://www.dts.edu/about/faculty/akuruvilla/#media>, cited 15/6/2015, (ISB).

⁶⁴ Kuruvilla (2013: 176-178).

⁶⁵ Kuruvilla (2013: 189).

⁶⁶ Kuruvilla (2013: 167).

understanding or salvation gained.⁶⁷ This is confirmed throughout his methodological move to his Christ-like special hermeneutic, i.e. the text depicts an example to be followed which is the restoration of the *Imago Dei*. Also in Kuruvilla's footnote for the above quotation he confirms his leaning to the 'example value' of Christ's life-lived, stating, 'The "goal" of the law was Christ, for the law depicted what the perfect Man would look like. The "fulfilment" of the law was Christ, for the law was perfectly obeyed by this Man.'⁶⁸ Note that the 'goal' is not salvific, rather it involves a strong view of sanctification via obedience in the Spirit.

With Kuruvilla holding the position that Christ does not 'nullify' the Law we find that when he comes to the classic NT texts concerning Christ as 'ending the law' he works hard to explain these as having been read too literally. One may be drawn to ask at this point why Kuruvilla is so keen to view Law as upheld and wade into an age-old argument on the continuation or replacement/removal of the Law and how it relates to 'Gospel.'⁶⁹ One answer is that, Kuruvilla finds it necessary to uphold the Law, not only because he seeks to theologically uphold the ethics of the *Mosaic Law* but because he is saying that every single pericope within the entire canon generates a theological interpretation which brings a divine demand to the people of God. Kuruvilla quotes 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 with regularity which is clearly important in the formation of his preaching hermeneutic which focuses on week-by-week discipleship within the church.⁷⁰ Yet to this he adds 'the Law'/ law as relevant for today for over forty pages. While, much of this debate moves here through often argued territory concerning Law and grace (and how both function in both Testaments) he does acknowledge that Paul sounds most negative concerning the OT Law suggesting that the apostle means to say such negativity refers only to a legalism rather than law per se. Kuruvilla states,

Cranfield helpfully observes that Paul did not possess a word group in the Greek that was equivalent to "legalism." One must therefore "be ready to reckon with the possibility that Pauline statements, which at first sight seem to disparage law, were really directed not against the law itself but against that misunderstanding and misuse of it for which we now have convenient terminology."⁷¹ For Paul then, the antithesis of grace is not law – for law does not, indeed, reveal both divine demand and divine grace,

⁶⁷ Kuruvilla (2013: 242-43). See *Exemplars Galore* section. Here Kuruvilla shows how Christ's teaching/life is concerned with example to be followed (divine demand).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Kuruvilla (2013: 154) recognises the tension in this respect, 'Paul seemingly declared the law to be no longer binding (Rom 6:14), it having come to bring about wrath, increase transgression, and arouse sinful passions ((4:15; 5:20; 7:5). Moreover, Christ abolished the law in his flesh (Eph 2:15), and the first covenant was rendered "obsolete" (Heb 8:13)... Yet, paradoxically, the law is said to have been written for all believers (1 Cor 9:8-10) and frequently, demands of the Christian made in the NT are grounded upon those same OT laws (Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; Eph 6:2; Tim 5:18; Jas 2:8-11; 1 Peter 1:15-16; etc.). After all, all Scripture is profitable (2 Tim 3:16).'

⁷⁰ Kuruvilla (2013: 27, 69, 70, 79, 105, 154, 189, 194, 247, 262, 264, 279).

⁷¹ Kuruvilla quoting, Cranfield, C. E. B. 1979, *The Epistle to the Romans: International Critical Commentary, Vol II*, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, p. 853.

even in its remedy for failure and disobedience – but rather, law “as an arrogant and arbitrarily chosen target of human ambition and as a system of human achievement, that is, legalism.”⁷²

Yet an argument for or against Law/law post Christ, need not be contended for here. Rather, we have noted that Kuruvilla’s keenness to uphold moral law emanates from seeing divine demand as existing throughout the Christian canon – from both this position and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. We will see in chapter 4 that Genesis 22 itself may well also be a significant influence on his understanding of divine demand and faith working in combination.

One is left to wonder if indeed Kuruvilla’s method needs such a forceful upholding of the Law/law. For 2 Timothy 3:16-17 features consistently throughout his hermeneutic. However, it is through covenant renewal terms and Law upheld (theologically) that Kuruvilla is able to step away from HR/RHP constructs that state completion and the fulfilment of the Law.

Summary of Kuruvilla’s methodology

We have seen that although there is much to be debated regarding Kuruvilla’s worked-out foundations for his Christiconic methodology, the method itself is straightforward and its functional repeatability one of its greatest strengths. Kuruvilla’s Christiconic methodology has been seen to work via the following two ordered steps:

- 1) Each pericope has a single theological interpretation which the preacher must determine by ‘privileging of the text,’ to discover the original intention of the author (divine with human). Once the theology of the pericope has been established, this theology forms a divine demand.
- 2) The divine demand is then applied by the preacher by stating the specific demand in terms of what it means to be Christ-like and the congregants are to respond in obedience. This combines the move from the OT text to Christ as interpretation forms an application simultaneously with his Christiconic move.

As we have seen, Kuruvilla starts with six foundational reading rules which are found in historic Christian tradition and are transparent. That said, we have seen that within Kuruvilla’s methodology there are also a number of additional assumptions which fall outside his reading rules. These assumptions affect his hermeneutics just as much as his rules for reading, and while some are

⁷² Kuruvilla (2013: 174). Citing Moule, C.F.D. 1967, “Obligation in the Ethic of Paul,” in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, Eds. Farmer, W.R., Moule, C.F.D., Niebuhr, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.393, 403.

biblically formed doctrinal constructs, others are distinctive assumptions which Kuruvilla brings to his methodology:

- 1) Any given pericope has one right reading that the interpreter must find.
- 2) 'Preaching' is defined as being delivered only to Christian believers within the church and does not concern proclamation of the Gospel, biblical theology, or teaching of biblical theology.
- 3) The goal of preaching concerns only the sanctification of believers.
- 4) Sanctification is taken as a secondary separate process to salvation typical of the Reformed tradition.
- 5) Christ has not abolished the Law.
- 6) The Law now stands theologically because the transhistorical course of the text renders the 'letter of the Law' impossible.
- 7) All biblical pericopes are to be read as Law/Torah was originally intended to be read.
- 8) Reception history has no bearing on methodology for preaching Christ today, whether this is evident within the OT (e.g. messianic readings of text from around the time of exile onwards), the NT (e.g. methodology used by the apostles), or within the last two millennia of the church.
- 9) The method presents the text as concerning a primarily human-centric approach. This leans towards direct application in regards to what the believer should do as opposed to a theocentric approach which presents what God has done (and which requires a further methodological step to application).

Having looked at the methodologies of both Greidanus and Kuruvilla concerning the interpretation of OT text and the hermeneutic move to Christ, we can now look at each scholar's method in practice as we see how their individual interpretations of the *Akedah* and its application through their central rule to Christ. Above we have begun to note by comparison the similarities and differences of Greidanus and Kuruvilla. However, it would seem appropriate research-wise, to suggest that only after one has seen their methods in practice can a full comparison and conclusions be reached. Each scholar's use of their set-out example, the *Akedah*, will be discussed, not only as being a systematic methodology and exegesis, but also as sermonic form in action as we trace their methodology in practice all the way to the pulpit.

Section Two: Interpretation to Praxis

Methodologies in Practice: Greidanus and Kuruvilla on Genesis 22

Having seen their methodological underpinnings, Greidanus' and Kuruvilla's interpretations in practice can now be viewed. This will be done using both their published expositions of Genesis 22 and their preached sermons.¹ In doing this we will be able to note the practical workability of their methodologies, and see if these are able to fully inform praxis, or if indeed methodological variations are evident within the pulpit. With both scholars having published commentaries on Genesis after their Genesis 22-applied hermeneutical works, these later commentaries will here be used as primary sources (though with some reference to these earlier works).

Genesis 22 as a central example text

The Genesis 22 narrative, known to Jews as 'the binding of Isaac' (*Akedah*) and often to Christian as 'the near sacrifice of Isaac', is a monumental text indeed. Indeed Elie Weisel states,

As a literary composition... the *Akeda* – is unmatched in Scripture. Austere and powerful, its every word reverberates into infinity, evoking suspense and drama, uncovering a whole mood based on a before and continuing into an after, culminating in a climax which endows its characters with another dimension.²

For Wiesel, such a significant composition is only matched by the narrative's significance within Scripture/Midrash, for he states that 'the theme of the *Akeda* occupies as important a place as the creation of the world or the revelation at Sinai.'³ Within Christian interpretation, Genesis 22 has not been quite so heightened in such terms, for interpretation is rife with examples that show it to be a fore-running shadow of the heightened substance of Golgotha, the Christian pinnacle. Yet it is primarily because of this, that the text remains a classic for preaching Christ. Thus Greidanus' (and therefore Kuruvilla's) choice of Genesis 22 as an example text concerning preaching methodology is an excellent one indeed; not least because the hermeneutic movement to Christ is rich with multiple possibilities.

It should be noted here that, while subversive readings of Genesis 22 have been found as increasingly commonplace over the last century (a reading approach that R.W.L. Moberly has called 'the hermeneutics of suspicion') here they are not our concern.⁴ For both Greidanus and Kuruvilla read the text in a classic sense that upholds Abraham as righteous in obedience, and of sound mind and hearing regarding 'the test' of God who is good. As Kuruvilla notes,

¹ For their published exegesis' see Greidanus (1999: 292-318), Greidanus (2007: 194-212), Kuruvilla (2013: 211-269), and Kuruvilla (2014: 250-264).

² Wiesel, Elie 1976, *Messenger of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends*, New York, Random House, p. 62.

³ Wiesel (1976: 73).

⁴ Moberly (2000: 162-182).

I accept the veracity of the biblical account as a starting premise, construing it as a part of Scripture: it was God speaking... this account will be dealt with as it stands, without undermining it.⁵

That said, it should not go unnoticed that some aspects of Genesis 22 have always been of a troubling nature for the reader/interpreter. For example, George Whitfield spoke both of 'Abraham's piety' and that 'unbelievers [were to] learn of faithful Abraham and believe whatever is revealed from God', from a test 'so ghastly' and which involved a 'severe command' 'enough to stagger the strongest faith.'⁶ Similarly Spurgeon opened his sermon on Genesis 22 : 8, *A Type and its Teaching*, by declaring,

How stern a trial; how striking the triumph; how sublime, both in action and passion, was the faith of Abraham in that terrible crisis.⁷

Abraham Kuruvilla's 2008 sermon on the *Akedah, Ace the Test*, is available online.⁸ However, in the absence of a similar link, download or audio file of Sidney Greidanus preaching Genesis 22, he has kindly made available his typed sermon of Genesis which he preached a number of times circa 1976.⁹ Although this sermon was written a considerable time before the publication of Greidanus' works, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (1999), and *Preaching Christ from Genesis* (2007), (both of which include the *Akedah* as a worked out example/exposition), it is remarkable just how closely this earlier sermon holds to his later published methodology. This shows that for Greidanus, his methodology has remained consistent over time. Kuruvilla's 2008 sermon was delivered some seven years before the publication of his 2015 work *Privilege the Text*, and his sermon too holds very closely to his own later published interpretation/methodology of Genesis 22, as does also his own commentary on Genesis.¹⁰

Once again we will view the work of Greidanus first (HR) before moving to Kuruvilla's Christiconic alternative.

⁵ Kuruvilla (2013: 215).

⁶ Whitfield (2012: 84-85).

⁷ Spurgeon, C. H. 1980, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons Preached by C. H. Spurgeon, Revised and Published 1916*, Texas, Pilgrim Publications, p 361.

⁸ Kuruvilla, Abraham, 1/02/08, *Ace the Test*, Dallas Theological Seminary website, www.dts.edu/media/play/ace-the-test-abraham-kuruvilla/, cited 15/6/15.

⁹ Greidanus' original unpublished written Gen. 22 sermon document is available to read in its original form, see Appendix I. The document shows Greidanus' modifications, developments and clarifications in his own handwriting on his original typed manuscript. The 1976 time of writing/modification is written by Greidanus on the sermon, this was also confirmed by Greidanus (1976-78) in email form to the thesis' author – see Appendix II. Greidanus' sermon will be footnoted/cited as Greidanus (1976: 1-8).

¹⁰ Kuruvilla (2014).

Chapter Three

Greidanus' method demonstrated using Genesis 22

To recap, we recall that Greidanus' overall method is firstly to look at the OT text in isolation (general hermeneutics) before making his HR Christocentric move (special hermeneutics).¹ While here we have already suggested that he may not fully stick to this in practice, as he seems to have one eye on the OT text and the other on an HR canonical meta-narrative, he once again reminds us that as he approaches Genesis 22 this indeed is his methodological intention. He states,

In their legitimate concern for relevance... commentaries frequently fail to ask first what message Israel received from this narrative.²

Such a statement (the 'message Israel received'), concerns the initial general hermeneutic move, rather than concerning reception history, because for Greidanus it is considered the same as authorial intent. With this in mind Greidanus splits his general hermeneutics into his standard five headings so as to strive for the author's intentions in writing to Israel before turning to his Christocentric move. These headings are:

- 1) Text and Context
- 2) Literary Features
- 3) The Plot Line
- 4) Theocentric Interpretation
- 5) Textual Theme and Goal³

So as to remain with Greidanus' own concerns we will follow each of his headings to outline and critique his interpretational movements (where relevant). With there being many evident examples of preachers and scholars who utilise HR methods for preaching this section will draw on the voices of these interpreters by way of critique of Greidanus and expansion on his HR methodology.

1) Text and Context

It is common amongst preachers and scholars to note Genesis 22 as being the pinnacle of Abraham's faith walk with God.⁴ This is usually taken from a straightforward literary analysis of the Abrahamic

¹ We will continue to use Kuruvilla's definition of 'general' and 'special' hermeneutics in this way so as not to add unnecessary new terminology or different categories.

² Greidanus (2007: 194).

³ Using Greidanus' headings/sections from Greidanus (2007: 195-201), also see Greidanus (1999: 279-307).

⁴ For example Tremper Longman III places the whole of Genesis 12-21 under the heading 'The journey of faith' and gives Genesis 22 the heading of 'The ultimate test of faith' and states that concerning Genesis 21 'it appears that the plot has reached its appropriate resolution. The promised child has been born! However, such a reaction to the story is soon shown to be premature.' See Longman, Tremper III 2005, *How to Read Genesis*, Illinois, IVP, p. 128 & 134. Similarly Derek Kidner states that – 'the test, instead of breaking him, brings him to the summit of his lifelong walk with God.' See Kidner, Derek 1967, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*,

narrative. For example, concerning Abraham, Elie Wiesel states that ‘one day God decided once more to test him – for the tenth and last time.’⁵ While Greidanus does not state this in such terms he effectively does so by comparison of Genesis 12 and 22 noting that ‘the stakes are raised’⁶, and using Rendsburg, Greidanus shows this transition via a chiastic structural analysis of the wider Abrahamic narrative with the *Akedah*. In this he sees the whole of the Abraham story repeated in short within Genesis 22 itself and interprets Genesis 22 within the context of the whole Abrahamic narrative. Greidanus states,

For our present narrative, the important issue in this chiasm is the narrator’s deliberate parallel development between Genesis 12:1-9 and Genesis 22:1-19.⁷

Greidanus falls short of actually claiming this chiasm as authorially intended and yet his linking of Genesis 12 and 22 does suggest he views the structure in this way. However, to claim a chiasm across a long narrative where one has so many different individual stories to choose to fit into this structure (or indeed omit) as being purposed by the author is not something one should state definitively. Authorial intention is therefore questionable, and this claim cannot stand up alone. That said, partial support for such a claim is evident in Greidanus as he notes the linguistic linking via word repetition of the calling of Abraham (Genesis 12) with Genesis 22 as a likely purposed authorial motif. He states,

In Genesis 12:1-9 the Lord commanded Abram to “go” [*lek-lekā*], offer up his past (country, kindred, father’s house), and receive the promises of the Lord’s rich blessings. In this narrative the Lord commands Abraham to “go” [*lek-lekā*], but now to offer up his future, “your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love.”⁸

Greidanus states that *lek-lekā* is ‘used in the Bible only in these two passages and, in the feminine form, in Song 2:10.’⁹ Specifically, it is this unique repetition that presents reasonable evidence of a likely authorial intended link between Genesis 12 and 22, rather than a worked out, but arguably selective, chiasm across a long narrative. It is this link that structurally ties Genesis 12 to 22 together

Illinois, IVP, p. 142-3. As a preached example US Baptist preacher Chuck Missler notes that Genesis 22 ‘represents the climax of the life of Abraham.’ See Missler, Chuck, *Sermon: Gen. 22 & 24: Resurrection of Isaac*, www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/viewcat.php?cid=549&min=20&orderby=titleA&show=20, cited 16/7/15.

⁵ Note that Wiesel does not set out to catalogue the ten times. He may well see this as literally a tenth testing but importantly here we note that the *Akedah* is the final test. In Wiesel (1976: 63).

⁶ Greidanus (2007: 195).

⁷ Greidanus (2007: 195).

⁸ Greidanus, (2007: 195). Others also specifically note the giving up of past and future (Gen. 12 & 22). For example Gerhard von Rad states that, ‘Abraham had to cut himself off from his whole past in ch. 12.1f.; now he must give up his whole future.’ In von Rad, Gerhard 1972, *Genesis*, London, SCM, p. 239. Robert Davidson also states that ‘[Abraham] is commanded by God to sacrifice that which alone guarantees the future.’ In Davidson, Robert 1979, *Genesis 12-50: Commentary*, Cambridge University Press, p. 94.

⁹ Greidanus (2007: 195, ft. 5).

and effectively forms the life of Abraham, with Genesis 22: 20-25:11 being focused on Abraham's lineage/Isaac after completing the test of the *Akedah*. No matter his reasoning, chiasm and word repetition, Greidanus makes the point concerning the pinnacle nature of the *Akedah* for Abraham using the wider Abrahamic narrative. Kuruvilla too recognises these two important events, via this repetition and the whole Abrahamic narrative, and states that, 'In Gen. 12 God spoke to the patriarch for the first time; in Gen 22, for the last time'¹⁰ thus noting that the *Akedah* brings with it a heightened importance of the divine word/command.

Greidanus' noting of Abraham offering up his future (already given his past) is certainly an important point. In making this statement one might conclude that he affirms a reading of the text that sees Genesis 22 as primarily concerning Abraham and God, yet in due course we will see that this is not the case.

2) Literary Features

Greidanus points out the narrator's evident prescience from the outset. For the narrator 'shows his hand' as an explicit feature of the narrative, e.g. 'in verse 14b, "as it is said to this day, 'On the mountain of the Lord it shall be provided.' " '¹¹ This 'voice' points to the narrative as written at a time when traditions surrounding the *Akedah* have already become well established. However, Greidanus makes an assumption concerning the narrator's introduction (22:1) which could be considered beyond the bounds of the text. He states,

The narrator's hand is evident throughout the narrative. He lets Israel know at the outset (v 1) that God did not really require child sacrifice as did the pagan gods but that God was testing Abraham. Abraham, of course, did not know this; he only heard the command, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and ... offer him..."¹²

Greidanus' assumption, that the reader knows it is 'only' a test, is not an unusual one. For example Paul Copan states,

God doesn't intend for Isaac to be sacrificed. No, Abraham isn't yet aware of what the reader knows – namely, that this is only a test.¹³

Similarly, Brevard Childs also states,

The reader is informed of a divine intention... information has been withheld from Abraham, namely, the command to slay the child is a test by God of Abraham. This

¹⁰ Kuruvilla (2014: 255).

¹¹ Greidanus (2007: 196).

¹² Greidanus (2007: 196).

¹³ From the chapter, *Child Abuse and Bullying? God's Ways and the Binding of Isaac*. In Copan, Paul 2011, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, p. 47.

knowledge allows the reader from the outset to experience the events in a different way from Abraham for whom no motivation is given.¹⁴

However, W. Lee Humphreys (who, like Copan, is expounding the *Akedah* in the realm of questions concerning God's character), points out the assumption that Greidanus, Copan and Childs make. Lee Humphreys still acknowledges the separation of the reader from Abraham in terms of how the text functions by showing Abraham as isolated and 'out of the loop',¹⁵ saying,

...we may be tempted to read it as many do: It is only a test. But such a mitigating reading is itself mitigated by the fact that tests are generally set before others as tasks to be carried out. In doing what is asked in appropriate or skilful ways, one shows that one successfully meets a test. One does not pass most tests by simply being willing to take them. We must wonder how far this test will go.¹⁶

Lee Humphreys' position holds to the text, without addition by assumption, and this is the same position of Kuruvilla who reads 'the test' with the full force of the narrative, as given.¹⁷ It might be suggested from Greidanus' quotation such an assumption emanates from, a) already knowing the outcome (i.e. it is such a well-known outcome/narrative that few approach it freshly without prior knowledge of the whole event), and b) knowing that child sacrifice is clearly rejected in the OT by YHWH (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-3 etc.) there be must an obvious 'get out' coming. However, the text does not state that a 'test' means less than a practical reality, and neither is the event set at an historical moment when pagan sacrifice practices are known to be against YHWH's Law (taking a final form reading of Genesis/Pentateuch as chronologically ordered in the canon). Therefore, in this case Greidanus reads the narrative of Genesis 22 from the view of having 'biblical hindsight' and with an established theology and knowledge of the character of God. Such a reading perspective is not unreasonable, for the text has clearly been read with a similar hindsight by both Jews and Christians for much of reception history. Indeed the text itself reveals that it was almost certainly written, in its final form, with knowledge of the Law (noting the Levitical sacrifices specified of an '*olah*' and a ram in 22:2, 13 as set out in Leviticus 1, 5 and 6). However, while reading with the hindsight of the law is a given, it is not necessarily the only perspective for reading the *Akedah*.

It should not be missed that, while Greidanus' assumption of 'only a test', circumnavigates conflict between the command to sacrifice Isaac and later understanding of YHWH's view of child sacrifice (which it would seem that it intends to do), it does not deal with more complex questions that are

¹⁴ Childs, Brevard S. 1992, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, London, SCM Press, p. 327.

¹⁵ Humphreys, W. Lee 2001, *The Character of God in the Book of Genesis*, Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, p. 138.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Kuruvilla (2014: 254-5). Kuruvilla holds to the similar view of Moberly, that 'the test' is to be taken seriously and not read as 'only a test'. See Moberly 2000: 76-80).

raised concerning the character of a God for asking such a thing. This problem thus remains close to the text.

Greidanus deals no further with the concept of child sacrifice in the text.¹⁸ However, he does state another much noted contradiction. This is the command concerning the death of Isaac in light of the promises to make Abraham into a great nation through him,¹⁹ as he reads Genesis 22 within the wider Abrahamic narrative concerning the recurring theme of promise and covenant (Genesis 12, 15, 17, 18 & 21). He states,

¹⁸ The concept of Gen. 22's relationship to child sacrifice has been much discussed. For example, John Levenson has extensively critiqued the *Akedah* both in terms of the cult of Molech and also as an etiology for animal sacrifice in relation to child sacrifice. See Levenson, Jon D. 1993a, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity*, Newhaven/London, Yale University Press, pp. 18-24, 111-124. However, Greidanus is wise not to get significantly dragged into this debate as he is primarily dealing with Gen. 22 in terms of 'the world of the text' and 'the world in front of the text' (to use Ricoeur's categories) through engaging with the final form text. Because of this the child sacrifice debate is largely outside of the task of the preacher. With regards to preaching Gen. 22 Gerhard von Rad shows how he sees the task of the preacher as interacting primarily with the final form of the text only while being aware of possible earlier traditions that the text may have remaining within it. Von Rad states, 'There is no doubt that the new meaning which now illuminates the old structure of the narrative can be grasped only in close connection with the larger context of the preceding history of Abraham. It is only thus that we open up the way to a proper interpretation of Genesis 22, and it may now have become clear that any discussion of the practice of child sacrifice should be kept out of the sermon.' In von Rad, Gerhard 1973, *Biblical Interpretation in Preaching*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, p. 34. That said, it is still difficult to not mention child sacrifice at all (and thus von Rad's interaction with it), for it will be a question raised in the mind of the listeners. Perhaps an apt approach here is simply to present the requested sacrifice of Isaac in terms of a further contradiction beyond the promise and the command, i.e. not only is God asking Abraham to believe in the promises in contradiction but He Himself is also working in divine impossibility concerning his own Law also. If such an approach is taken citation of OT texts where grace and human heart response is held higher than strict adherence to Torah would support such a position (e.g. Deut. 23:3 in contrast to Ruth 1:4; 4:10, and, 1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6, Psalm. 51: 17).

¹⁹ Though Greidanus notes Abraham's obedience, though the seeming contradictory speeches from God (promise/command), he does not develop a possible outworking of this contradiction as some do. It is not uncommon for preachers to link Gen. 22:5 ("we will come back to you") with Heb. 11:19 which tells of Abraham's belief in Isaac's resurrection. For example this move is made by, S. Lewis Johnson. See, Johnson, S. Lewis, *The Old Testament's Greatest Scene* - www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/viewcat.php?cid=562&min=20&orderby=titleA&show=20 , cited 17/7/15.

Luther also utilises Heb. 11:19 as he incorporates Abraham's growing faith through Isaac's miraculous birth into his reading. Wilhelm Vischer incorporates Luther's approach and quotes Luther as follows, 'All the more gloriously does Abraham's faith shine forth when he obeys God with a willing heart. In this he departs not from the promise – the promise so stern and contradictory. Between life and death there is no middle course, yet he believes that his son, though he die, shall have seed. In this way Abraham holds fast to the divine promise, and ascribes to divine majesty the power to raise his dead son again. Already he had seen how he was born of a withered body and a barren mother, and now he believes that even after he has been buried and turned to ashes, he shall be raised from the dead, to the end that through him he might have seed. He accounted, as Heb. 11: 19 says, that God can raise from the dead and make alive.' In Vischer, Wilhelm 1949, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ: Vol 1*, Lutterworth, p. 142.

Now Abraham has to rely on the Lord even when the Lord seems to go back on his covenant promises.²⁰

Greidanus picks up on two other significant literary inclusions. The first is the way the narrator slows the story at what he states are 'two crucial points': a) preparing for the journey in 22:3, and b) the 'climax of the conflict' in 22:9-11 (the binding, Abraham's move to slay Isaac, and the divine intervention). These slowings are interpreted only as 'crucial points.'²¹ In his actual sermon he does not expound the narrator's 'slowing' in 22:3 (but he does expound the second 'slowing' of 22:9-11), he states,

Soon they came to the place where the offer was to be made. The narrative slows down and very deliberately records every action: "Abraham built an altar; he laid the wood in order, he bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar on the wood."²²

However, while Greidanus notes the narratives' detail and 'slowing' nature, what he does with this in preaching is interesting, he continues,

Would he really go through with it? Did he trust God so much that he could offer this son in whom his whole future was bound up? Would he obey God in faith rather than follow his own desires and feelings?

Relentlessly the narrative pushes on to the moment of truth: "Then Abraham put forward his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."²³

It is clear that while the slower sections are 'crucial points', bringing important detail to a narrative that is otherwise sparse in detail, their crucial nature emanates from the growing suspense they bring as they build tension above that already generated by the lack of conversation of Abraham and Isaac (or Abraham and God). Greidanus' 'crucial points' are well described with Herman Gunkel's words concerning 22:9-10, 'The tempo is intentionally ritardando in order to sharpen the tension.'²⁴

It can be seen from Greidanus' quotation above that the narrator's details build questions within Greidanus' mind as a reader. These are conveyed as possibilities to the congregation as after the preparation (22:3), and on the journey, he presents the near silence of Abraham as open for conjecture in terms of his plight and trauma, as do many.²⁵ He states,

²⁰ Greidanus (2007: 195).

²¹ Greidanus (2007: 196).

²² Greidanus (1976: 3).

²³ Greidanus in Appendix I (1976: 4).

²⁴ Gunkel, Herman 1910, *Genesis*, Macon, Mercer University Press, p. 235.

²⁵ Primarily, two interpretative approaches to the near silence of the journey are generally utilised. This first, is as Greidanus, i.e. to take the near silence of the text as giving licence to explore reasonable assumptions/conjecture based on a normative human response to the divine command (both in terms of Abraham's mind during the night between 22:2-3, or indeed on the journey to Moriah). By its very nature, such an approach can lead one too far from the text if restraint is not exercised. Preacher Joe Focht in-fills the night between Gen. 22:2 & 3 saying, that this 'sleepless night' had 'some exchange between Abraham and

Can you imagine what must have gone through Abraham's mind that night? I think he must have tossed and turned, seeking a way of escape from obeying God's commandment. Perhaps his mind was playing tricks on him; perhaps it wasn't God who had spoken to him; or perhaps God had said it but didn't mean it quite the way it sounded. How could God order him to offer the son of the promise on which his whole future depended? ...We are not told all what went through Abraham's mind. We read only of Abraham's immediate obedience... What a tortuous journey it must have been... He couldn't unburden his heart to anyone...²⁶

The remainder of Greidanus' literary analysis comes by the way of noting the use of words that are repeated which 'emphasise key concepts'.²⁷ Sometimes Greidanus chooses to just state, without any interpretation, which words are repeated. For example, he notes the repetition of "burnt offering" six times, "wood" five times, [and] "place" four times'.²⁸ It could well be argued that the repetition of burnt offering does indeed eventually play into his Christocentric move concerning 'typology of the Passover' within his actual preached sermon, while 'wood' and 'place' are not dwelt upon in his exegesis/sermon, despite his noting of their emphasis within the text.²⁹

God', and he even suggests, 'that night God spoke to him, not giving him the entire scenario, because he will act it out to see it.' See Focht, Joe, *Genesis 22-24:60*, at, www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/viewcat.php?cid=533, cited 20/7/15. Similarly, Luther in-fills the lack of conversation between Abraham and Isaac with interpretive dialogue between them concerning the impossibility of the promises in the face of Isaac's death. See Luther, Martin 1964, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 21-25: Luther's Works*, vol. 4, St. Louis, Concordia, pp. 112-3.

The second approach, is to 'read the silence' as being indicative of Abraham's solid, determined and committed obedience to God, yet without addition to the narrative. For example, after noting in Gen. 22: 4 that Abraham "lifted up his eyes" seeing "the place from afar" Erich Auerbach states, 'That gesture is the only gesture, is indeed the only occurrence during the whole journey, of which we are told; and though its motivation lies in the fact that the place is elevated, its uniqueness still heightens the impression that the journey took place through a vacuum; it is as if, while he travelled on, Abraham had looked neither to the right or the left, had suppressed any sign of life in his followers and himself save only their footfalls. Thus the journey is like a silent progress through indeterminate and the contingent, a holding of breath, a process which has no present, which is inserted, like a blank duration, between what has passed and what lies ahead, and which yet is measured: three days!' See Auerbach, Erich 1953, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, pp. 9-10. In his sermon titled *Abraham's Commitment* Plymouth Brethren preacher/theologian William McDonald combines engagement with both approaches. He states, 'Normally a father's heart in this situation would be heavy, but there is no indication of that. He moved with firm determination... [and] seemed to be propelled by a special inflow of grace and strength.' Yet McDonald also paraphrases Luther's position saying, 'Abraham's mind was racing' concerning the promise to become a nation with descendants as numerous as the stars, his love for Isaac etc. See, McDonald, William, *Abraham's Commitment*, www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/scr_index.php?act=topicSermons&topic=Abraham&page=0, cited 20/7/15.

Kuruville holds a similar position to Auerbach, as we will see in due course.

²⁶ Greidanus (1976: 2-3).

²⁷ Greidanus (2007: 196).

²⁸ Greidanus (2007: 196).

²⁹ 'Wood' has often found interpreters drawing parallels between, Isaac carrying the wood for the burnt offering (Gen. 22:6), and Christ "carrying the cross by himself" (John 19:16), as the very means of their own sacrifices. Its repetition has normally not been the focus of such an interpretation, rather it is the direct narrative parallel of events that forms this interpretation. Examples of such an interpretive parallel abound in patristic interpretation, e.g. Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Tertullian. See Kuruville (2013: 217-18). A classic

Regarding other word repetitions Greidanus chooses to not only note them, but to do so with interpretation. For example he states that, ‘The word “son” (*bēn*) is repeated ten times, showing the severity of the test for Abraham’ (not for readers) and he begins to show what will be his choice of approach for his HR progression of covenant fulfilment and God’s provision (ultimately in Christ) as this emanates from, his general hermeneutic movement into his special Christocentric move. He states,

The word “provide” is particularly significant. In response to Isaac’s question, “Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham answers, “God himself will provide (*yir’eh*) the lamb for the burnt offering, my son” (v 8). God does indeed provide the lamb for a burnt offering, the ram caught in a thicket by its horns (v13). Is it any wonder that Abraham called that place, *Yahweh-yir’eh*, “The Lord will provide” (v 14)? For good measure the narrator adds for a third time that to this day people use the proverb, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided” (*yērā’eh*) (v 14).³⁰

Here within Greidanus’ literary analysis we find two revealing omissions that have considerable ramifications for his whole interpretation. These may well initially appear to be two completely separate omissions. However, it will be argued that in fact they are intrinsic to one another in understanding and interpreting the *Akedah*.

The first, a) Greidanus chooses to translate ‘*elohim yr’h*’ and ‘*YHWH* [it shall be] *yr’h*’ (22:7/14), as ‘God/LORD will provide,’ and b) ‘*YHWH yir’eh*’ (22:14) also as ‘the LORD provides’ rather than *yr’h* or *yir’eh*’ being ‘seen’ or ‘sees.’ Throughout his interpretation this distinct possibility has no discussion. This omission is surprising and perhaps has been taken to drive towards one particular interpretation for preaching as it supports his main theme of provision in Christ as the fulfilment of the promise/covenant (22:17). However, it might be suggested that in looking for a strict repetition of words with singular meanings (rather than allowing for multiple means to bear on interpretation in their ambiguity) Greidanus has omitted ‘sees/seen’ as an important linguistic thematic throughout the text.

Having noted that *ra’ah* and *yir’eh* can be translated as ‘sees/seen’ it should not be missed that these three occurrences of seeing/providing are supported thematically to bolster the theme of seeing, and God showing. In 22:4 “Abraham lifted up his ‘eyes’ and ‘saw’ (*ra’ah*) the place.” Further to this the place that Abraham is to go to is a mountain in the region of *Moriah*, and it is common

modern example of this is Wilhelm Vischer’s interpretation. See Vischer (1949: 142-43). We will view Greidanus’ lack of interaction with the ‘place’ alongside that of Kuruvilla in a separate section as it warrants closer scrutiny to see its place in scholarship today.

³⁰ Greidanus (2007: 196).

amongst interpreters to suggest that *Moriah* may well have its basis as a word in 'seeing' (*ra'ah*).³¹ Therefore, in all we find six references to 'sight' and 'seeing' within the text.

Likewise, while Greidanus notes that 'place' (*maqom*) is mentioned four times (22: 3, 4, 9, and 14) this repetition is only a part of the larger theme of place within the *Akedah*. Not only is *maqom* used four times but we find that this place is highlighted further in six other significant ways. It is, a) in the 'land of Moriah' (22:2), b) on a specific mountain that God will show Abraham(22:2), c) the narrator marks the place out as 'there' (22:5) while telling the servants/lads to stay 'here', d) it is a place of significance being that of an altar, e) it is named (*Yahweh-yir'eh*), f) it has a saying or pun-name connected with it (22:14) which is of great significance having already become established in tradition.

The second important omission that Greidanus makes in terms of linguistic analysis is that he doesn't draw attention to the text's own conclusion as to the purpose of 'the test', given in 22:12 by the Angel of YHWH ("Now I know that you fear me"). Moberly states that, 'The eliciting of Abraham's fear of God is said to be the explicit purpose and goal of the test.'³² He continues,

... the primary narrative weight falls on... 'test' and 'fear of God'... The importance of the fear of God in relation to the divine testing becomes even clearer in the light of the fact that 'fear of God' is the primary term within the Old Testament for depicting a true and appropriate human response to God (a Hebrew equivalent to 'faith' in Christian parlance. Moreover, the particular formulation in Genesis 22:12 involves the participle (*yare'*) which is regularly used as a noun in construct with God/YHWH to denote a particular type of person, 'a fearer of God', 'God-fearing person'. So the sense is not just that on this particular occasion Abraham feared God, but that Abraham shows on this occasion that as a person he is appropriately designated by the Old Testament's prime category, 'one who fears God'.³³

³¹ The root meaning of *Moriah* is not a certainty. It has been argued that its linguistic construct has its basis in 'seeing,' (thus YHWH sees/seen, as in 22:14) or possibly 'fearing' by Moberly (Moberly (2000: 111-112)). While Luther also suggests that *Moriah* is constructed from 'fearing', stating, 'Moriah designates the mountain where God is feared' he also notes that 'some derive it from the Hebrew word *jarah*, which means "to teach." See Luther, Martin 1958, *Luther's Commentary on Genesis: Vo II, Chapters 22-50* (ET by J. Theodore Mueller), Michigan, Zondervan, ref. - Genesis 22. It might be suggested here that *Moriah* may well incorporate a sense of 'teaching' at this designated place. This is because in Gen. 22:2 Abraham is told to go to a place in the 'land of *Moriah*' that God will 'tell' you of. God may well be thought of in terms of being 'one who teaches,' while 'show' is perhaps misleading in the NRSV's English because it might even be more associated with 'seeing' rather than 'teaching'. It could also be possible that *Moriah*, the name, is intended to invoke thoughts of 'YHWH,' 'seeing' and 'teaching.' While 'teaching' is often not considered at length it may well have purchase when one considers it alongside Moberly's suggestion that, as *Moriah* is evocative of the Jerusalem temple mount, the *Akedah* should be considered as concerning those that fear YHWH and therefore keep *Torah* - and the Jerusalem temple as the centre of Israel's worship. See Moberly (2000: 109-16, 181).

³² Moberly (2000: 78).

³³ Moberly (2000: 79).

Moberly's observation that 'the fear of God' should be assimilated with Abraham's faith in God is a most significant point for the interpretation of Genesis 22. Many preach Genesis 22 as concerning Abraham's faith/obedience/trust in God, yet without reference to 'the fear of the Lord.'³⁴ While 'faith' is often cited using the two explicit NT uses of the *Akedah* (James 2:21-23 and Hebrews 11:17-19), along with a general NT understanding of Abraham being a model of faith (e.g. Galatians 3), few recognise the general conceptual equivalency of 'fear' and 'faith' in the *Akedah* (as well as in a more general thematically sense within Genesis 22 the whole Abrahamic narrative). Moberly's work draws foundational conclusions in terms of the original location of 'faith' in Hebrews 11:17-19 and James 2:21-23 being *Moriah* and the *Akedah*. He states,

The New Testament explicitly engages with the story of Genesis 22 in two passages. Hebrews 11: 17-19 and James 2: 18-24. Each writer uses the story as a paradigm of their understanding of the key Christian term for appropriate human responsiveness to God, namely 'faith' (the NT equivalent to OT 'fear of God'). Abraham's faith in God's power to resolve in the future that which seemed impossible in the present, illustrates the nature of faith as an active engagement with that which is future and unseen (Heb 11:1) – Jesus being the supreme example of such a confident looking forward (Heb 12:2). Abraham's willingness to act in obedience to God provides the critical test whereby the reality of a confession of faith, which might just be words impossible to substantiate or unrelated to the way one lives, is shown to have genuine substance (Jas. 2:18-20). Both of these are powerful construals of Genesis 22 which relate Abraham's responsiveness to God with that expected of the Christian. It is not that they suppose that Abraham was a Christian; rather they see that which characterises Abraham as that which must also characterise the Christian, and which is best understood by Christians in the context of their own primary vocabulary of responsiveness to God, namely faith. The hermeneutic of these New Testament writers, which assumes a subtle dialectic of both continuity and difference in divine revelation and human response, is characteristic of Christian faith generally.³⁵

³⁴ For example with reference to Heb. 11 (but no mention of Gen. 22:12), Roy Hession asks/states 'What was Abraham being tested? - It's a test of faith.' See Hession, Roy, *The Burnt Offering, Gen. 22:7-8, Heb. 11:17-19 & Lev. 1:3-4*, <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/viewcat.php?cid=373&min=100&orderby=titleA&show=20>, cited on 10/08/15. Others draw similar conclusions yet with more weight on Heb. 11:17-19 as Abraham's faith in God is noted as specifically concerning the resurrection of Isaac. Examples include, Focht and Johnson (internet sermon bibliography, i.e. ISB henceforth). Also see Randles, Bill, *God Will Provide Himself a Lamb*, <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/viewcat.php?cid=817>, cited on 10/08/15, and Owen, J. Glyn, *Abraham's Supreme Sacrifice*, <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/viewcat.php?cid=13&min=40&orderby=titleA&show=20>, cited 10/08/15. While it is not so common to find sermons that specifically make Moberly's move of equating 'fear of God' with 'faith' as the main goal and outcome of the test George Whitfield does indeed effectively make this move as he also appears to incorporate Hebrews 11 and resurrection. He states, 'Was not this [the test] to try his faith' and continues as he exposit Gen. 22:12, 'Here then it was that Abraham received his son Isaac from the dead in figure. He was in effect offered upon the altar and God looked upon him as offered and given unto him. Now it was that Abraham's faith, being tried, was found more precious than gold purified seven times in the fire.' See Whitefield (2012: 87, 91).

³⁵ Moberly (2000: 133).

In his sermon Greidanus certainly moves to talk of Abraham's faith, yet as he makes no mention of the importance of 'fear' as 'the test's' outcome (22:12), and one is left to assume that the language of 'faith' is with reference to Abraham's overall life of faith in God, and general NT comment on Abraham (which for him James 2 and Hebrews 11 are simply a part of, yet not drawing this from Genesis 22, as we shall see).

From the above it can be argued that word repetition alone (or driving to a singular meaning of a word when further meanings for a word relevantly/ contextually exist) cannot give a full interpretation of all thematic concerns within this text.

3) The Plot Line

Having established the textual emphasis, 'the Lord provides', from the narrative Greidanus continues by giving a brief outline of the whole story. Points of note here are: a) '...the setting of the text: "after all these things" (22:1)'³⁶ which he sees as referring to the events of chapter 21 rather than as concerning the entire Abrahamic narrative to date,³⁷ b) Again the tension rising on the journey and ascent, c) The conflict which builds to a 'climax' in the building of the altar and Abraham moving to slay his son (22:9-10) as the story reaches an 'excruciating pinnacle'³⁸, and d) The tension then breaking with God's intervention.

Greidanus continues to simply outline the story as read but it is the building of tension towards the divine intervention that is most significant in his preached sermon which mirrors this well before using the second half of the sermon to reassure his listeners that the story is a model of faith to aspire to as a patriarchal narrative for 'never again did God test a man the way he tested Abraham.'³⁹ From this point in his sermon, Greidanus moves to expounding promise and covenant and the link to Christ.

³⁶ Greidanus (2007: 197).

³⁷ While Greidanus opts for "all these things" as referring to the events of Gen. 21, others have argued that this incorporates a sense of the entire Abrahamic narrative to this point. Kuruvilla for example, opts for this latter position, and with an understanding established of the *Akedah* being the pinnacle of Abraham's walk with God his position seems most likely, especially as "all these things" has such an all-encompassing aspect to it. See Kuruvilla (2014: 253).

³⁸ Greidanus (2007: 197).

³⁹ The suggestion of a unique patriarchal temptation will be discussed in due course. Greidanus (1976: 5).

4) Theocentric Interpretation

As we have seen, Greidanus proposes a theocentric focus in his interpretation. Therefore, he notes that while many have focussed on Abraham specially (Greidanus notes Kierkegaard⁴⁰), and Isaac also as main characters, 'God is the protagonist'⁴¹ who sets the test. Greidanus supports this as follows,

Abraham assures Isaac, 'God will provide'(v 8); 'the Lord stops Abraham from offering up Isaac (v 12); the Lord provides the ram (v 13); Abraham names the place, "The Lord will provide" (v 14); the narrator adds, "as it is said to this day, 'On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided'" (v 14); and the Lord promises to bless Abraham, his offspring, and the nations (cc 15-18).⁴²

Within his sermon, Greidanus does hold to the above statement. At no point does he drive the point home of 'God as protagonist' as such but with 'the Lord provides' as his central point he regularly notes God's movements, speeches and directive in the narrative. His quest for theocentricity may well have aided Greidanus' choice of 'the Lord provides' as the central sole theme, and yet it could also be argued that 'the Lord is seen/sees' would have been more theocentric than 'provides' for it focuses on God 'seeing', or that He has seen, rather than on an object of provision by Him.

The language of 'God' or 'The Lord' also remains long past the point of making his move towards Christ in his preached sermon (we have already noted that Greidanus argues for theocentric interpretation somewhat reactively to Christomonism). This theocentric language runs until the last page of his printed sermon when 'Jesus' and 'God's Son' is cited as the one who is provided by 'The Lord' for salvation.⁴³

5) Textual Theme and Goal

In this section Greidanus determines to lay out the central theme and goal of the text. He proposes two possibilities. We have already noted that the text's own declaration in 22:12, that Abraham's fear of the Lord (faith) is the goal of the test (and thus a central point in the narrative), is not a focus Greidanus notes or takes. This is not surprising because he rejects 'the test' as his first possible choice of a central theme. As a result, the outcome of 'the test' is therefore off his radar and is set aside in terms of its significance. Greidanus does note that scholars of weight have seen 'the test' as of high importance as a textual emphasis. He states,

⁴⁰ Greidanus (2007: 198).

⁴¹ Greidanus (2007: 198).

⁴² Greidanus (2007: 198-99).

⁴³ Note there are two alternative endings of Greidanus' 1976 sermon. Both offer different renderings of a Christmas time message that combines the giving of the Son in incarnation as well as in death. See Greidanus (1976: 7 & 8).

Von Rad maintains that one of the main thoughts in this narrative is “the idea of a radical test of obedience. That God, who has revealed himself to Israel, is completely free to give and to take, and that no one may ask, ‘What doest thou?’ (Job 9:12; Dan 4:32), is without doubt basic to our narrative... Yahweh tests faith and obedience.”⁴⁴

Greidanus also notes that similarly Wenham affirms von Rad’s suggestion saying, ‘the central thrust of the story [is] Abraham’s wholehearted obedience and the great blessings that have flowed from it.’⁴⁵

However, Greidanus sums up these arguments as follows,

These comments suggest that Israel heard in this narrative the message that God is sovereign and free to test his people’s faith, and that he expects the unquestioning obedience and total trust that Abraham displayed... Although this theme is not unbiblical, I believe it misses the specific theme of this particular narrative.⁴⁶

We have already seen that in his sermon he is quick to express that God never again tested someone with such severity as He did Abraham, and because of this he affirms the idea that this is a ‘patriarchal temptation’ only (as suggested by Luther).⁴⁷ His above statement upholds von Rad and Wenham’s views as biblical, just not as a primary concern of Genesis 22.

Greidanus’ suggestion that ‘the test’ of 22:1 is ‘only a test,’ because the reader is aware that child sacrifice is not acceptable to YHWH, has already removed some horror from the text and something of the awesome nature of the Almighty. Likewise, now moving to assure his listeners that ‘the test’ is an exclusive ‘patriarchal temptation,’ not only surely removes the sting from the narrative’s punch, but it does so this time in regards to application of the text to its readers, for it may be heard as in effect saying, “don’t worry; God won’t test you like this”.

A sense of patriarchal temptation is certainly relevant, for few would claim that such an event was to be followed to the letter by ordinary fathers and their sons. However, if the concept of the extreme testing of God’s people, by God Himself, is lost, then application of Genesis 22 becomes weakened and those who have found ‘the test’ deeply encouraging in the realm of God Almighty and His sovereign acts will now find discouragement concerning their plight (e.g. those Jews and Christians

⁴⁴ Greidanus (2007: 199), citing von Rad (1972: 244).

⁴⁵ Greidanus (2007: 199). Wenham, Gordon J. 1994, *Genesis 16-50: Vol 2*, Word, Dallas, p. 112.

⁴⁶ Greidanus (2007: 199).

⁴⁷ Luther states, ‘...because Abraham is the foremost and greatest among the holy patriarchs, he endures truly patriarchal trials which his descendants would not have been able to bear...’, in Pelikan, Jaroslav and Hansen, Walter (eds.) 1964, *Luther’s Works Vol. II: Lectures on Genesis Chapters 21-25*, St. Louis, Concordia.

who suffered greatly in the *Shoah*). The preacher must be able to clearly mark out both the unique nature of ‘the test’ as well as its universal application concerning the faith of all Christian believers.⁴⁸

Greidanus’ conclusion of the test being ‘only’ and ‘only patriarchal’ primarily comes from him not identifying with Abraham as the central character exemplar who is to be followed, while Wenham and von Rad’s suggestion is that the *Akedah* concerns the ‘testing Abraham’s faith/fear of God towards the establishing of the patriarch as an aspirational model of obedience for Israel.’⁴⁹

We shall return to critique Greidanus’ position concerning Abraham as an exemplar after we have seen Greidanus’ central theme of Genesis 22. Greidanus states,

To hear the more specific theme of this narrative we first need to hear it as the narrator intended Israel to hear it. In this connection, a key question is, With whom would Israel have identified? This is often a difficult question to answer with any degree of certainty. In this narrative the choices are limited to Abraham and Isaac. Initially hearers would probably have identified with Abraham and the excruciating choice he had to make. But at a deeper level, there can be little doubt that Israel would have identified with Isaac: Would Isaac live or die? If Isaac had died on the altar, there would never have been a people of Israel; the ram dies so that Isaac, that is, Israel, might live. Even in modern times Jews identify with Isaac and they read this narrative of what they call “The Binding of Isaac” on the Jewish New Year’s Day.⁵⁰

Having suggested that Israel would have identified primarily with Isaac, Greidanus says the following to state his understanding of *the Akedah’s* primary theme,

Moreover it is clear that “God will Provide” is a “turning point of the story,” as Wenham and others admit. But “God will Provide” is not merely a turning point of the story, it is the heart of the message of this narrative for Israel. When Israel heard this narrative of Isaac on the altar, it heard the story of its very existence in the balance. For Israel, Isaac’s death or life is the heart of the plot. At the climax, Isaac is only a knife-thrust removed from death; then he receives his life back and a ram is offered “instead of” Isaac. This entry into the text, not only does greater justice to the narrator’s plot line in verses 2 to 14 but also to his explicit signals of meaning given in the repeated keywords, “God will Provide.”⁵¹

Having established that Isaac is the main character that Israel would identify with Greidanus pushes home ‘The Lord will Provide’ as the text’s primary theme. He states,

...“God will Provide.” As we have seen, we hear these words first in Abraham’s testimony to Isaac, “God will provide” (v8), next implicitly in God’s actual provision of a

⁴⁸ It is common for interpreters to understandably be most cautious about direct application of the *Akedah* to the individual due to this being interpreted as condoning religious violence in the sense of “God told me to do this, I have divine approval.” See Chilton, Bruce 2008, *Abraham’s Curse: The Roots of Violence in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, New York, Doubleday, pp. 1-13.

⁴⁹ Greidanus (2007: 199).

⁵⁰ Greidanus (2007: 199-200).

⁵¹ Greidanus (2007: 200).

ram to be offered “instead of” Isaac (v 13), then in Abraham calling that place, “The Lord will provide” (v 14), and finally in the narrator’s own testimony, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided” (v 14). This focus on Isaac is even supported by the concluding covenant blessing which, in contrast to the blessings in Genesis 12:2-3, now deal not so much with Abraham as with his seed... (vv 17-18). Therefore, we can formulate the theme of this narrative for Israel as: The Lord provides a lamb for a burnt offering so that Isaac/Israel may live.⁵²

Christocentric Hermeneutics

Having seen Greidanus’ textual goal above, Greidanus then defines his theme,

The Lord provides a lamb for a burnt offering so that Isaac/Israel may live.⁵³

This prepares the interpretation for his Christocentric move, and which also has a strong element of substitutionary atonement within it. At the end of the section on his Christocentric move Greidanus reconfigures the above statement as a final sermon heading which conveys his general hermeneutic theme with appropriation to Christ. To give a clear understanding of where Greidanus is heading this is stated below,

The textual theme read, “The Lord provides a lamb for a burnt offering so that Isaac/Israel may live.” In the contexts of the whole of Scripture and redemptive history the message needs to be broadened considerably from Isaac/Israel to people from all nations. If we change “Isaac/Israel” to “his people,” this covers both Isaac/Israel and God’s people today. The words “a lamb for a burnt offering” need to be amended to cover also the death of Christ. If we substitute “a sacrificial lamb,” this covers the ram for Isaac, the lambs for Israel, and the “Lamb of God” for all God’s people. The resultant sermon theme is, *The Lord provides a sacrificial lamb so that his people may live.* We formulate the textual goal as follows, “to assure Israel that their faithful covenant LORD can be trusted to provide redemption.” The sermon goal can be similar: *To assure God’s people that their faithful covenant Lord can be trusted to provide their redemption.*⁵⁴

We will now view Greidanus’ hermeneutic movement to Christ using his seven categories for Christocentric preaching:

- 1) Redemptive-Historical Progression
- 2) Promise-Fulfillment
- 3) Typology [Christocentric]
- 4) Analogy
- 5) Longitudinal Themes
- 6) New Testament References
- 7) Contrast⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Greidanus (2007: 201).

⁵⁴ Greidanus (2007: 205).

⁵⁵ Greidanus (2007: 201-05).

While we have seen that he has stated that the interpreter should choose the strongest one or two of the seven we will see that in the case of Genesis 22 he uses four (i.e. Christocentric moves 1, 2, 5, 6). This is because his categories are somewhat intertwined but also because, as he notes, there are 'so many positive ways of preaching Christ' from the *Akedah*.⁵⁶

1) Redemptive-Historical Progression

Many preach using this broad method and draw direct lines to Christ in a single step move. Examples include: covenant given moves to Christ as bringer of the new covenant, OT type of Christ moves to Christ, or OT sacrifice moves to Christ/cross. Greidanus does incorporate some of these within his RHP method but builds his movement to Christ using a four step movement (five in his 1976 sermon) that incorporates a greater foundational progression spanning redemptive history. This progression adds weight to, and underlines, his Genesis 22 interpretation which has the typology of the Passover at its centre. The progression is:

- 1) The Lord provides a ram as a substitute offering so that Isaac/Israel may live.
- 2) Later, when Israel was enslaved in Egypt, the Lord saved their firstborn sons by means of the blood of a one-year-old ram: the Passover lamb.
- 3) Still later, when Israel was in the Promised Land, they offered burnt offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings at the tabernacle/temple in order to pay the penalty for sin (death) so they could live.
- 4) In the fullness of time, the Lord provides his Son Jesus as a substitute offering so that his people may live. John the baptizer introduces Jesus as "the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus himself proclaims that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).⁵⁷

In his 1976 sermon Greidanus includes an intermediate step which incorporates Isaiah 53 and fits in between points 3 and 4.⁵⁸ Greidanus states,

The temple worship further re-iterates this idea that a lamb can die in the place of a man. Men sinned, but they could bring their sin offerings to the temple and offer the lambs on the altar. One lamb after another died in the place of a man. And suddenly our Israelite recalls that the prophet Isaiah also writes about a lamb that dies instead of Israel. But Isaiah is not speaking about an animal; he is speaking of the Servant of the Lord: (53): "Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, so he opened not his mouth... But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Greidanus (2007: 205).

⁵⁷ Greidanus (2007: 201).

⁵⁸ For similar use of Isaiah 53 see Missler (ISB).

⁵⁹ Greidanus (1976: 6-7).

Why exactly Greidanus drops this intermediate step in his later work on methodology is unclear. Perhaps he felt that another step was unnecessary as his progression holds together without it. However, it certainly could have remained as it fits well with his methodology and adds insightful addition to his interpretation. Indeed it might be suggested here that there is an important linking between Gen. 22:1, 9, 10, Isaiah 53:7 and John 1:29 that many miss - the linking of a sheep sacrifice with a man. Isaac was going to be a sacrifice that would normally have been 'a lamb', and he shows this (22: 7), yet a 'ram' dies in his stead 22:13. In Isaiah 53:7 the Suffering Servant is described in ovine terms (Lamb to slaughter, sheep before shearers), and perhaps he is described as Isaac (silent and passive, willing and cooperative). In John 1:29 Christ is described as the 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World.' We will come to the possible typology presented here below but the above outlines where Greidanus could have taken his original link with Isaiah 53 in his typology of the Passover.⁶⁰

Greidanus presents this outlined progression, and it should be noted that he states this progression and moves on. Of course, when presenting a working example of a suggested preaching hermeneutic one cannot argue for every point and movement made. However, it should not go unnoticed that the above progression has a considerable amount of debate behind it. We will look briefly at this under two headings – a) Typology of the Passover, and b) John's 'The Lamb of God.'

a) Typology of the Passover.

To critique Greidanus' use of a 'typology of the Passover' within this section it is helpful to compare his interpretation with the specific position/objection of Kuruvilla. For Kuruvilla deals with, and declines the use of, both Passover and Christocentric typology. He states,

The purported willingness of Isaac to go to an altar rendered him a virtuous sacrifice that was seen by Jewish interpreters as efficacious for future generations of Israelites. For instance, Mek R. Ishmael (*Pisha 7 on Ex 12:13*) interprets God's "When I see the blood I will pass over you" as in fact, concerning the blood of the sacrifice of Isaac, anachronistic as it may be.⁶¹

Although Kuruvilla also gives other Jewish examples of this, his conclusion regarding the *Akedah* as an 'etiology of Passover'⁶² is that 'One is hard-pressed to see how this line of typological thinking is substantiated in the canonical Scriptures.'⁶³

⁶⁰ For more on this see Nidhani De Andrado, Paba 2013, *The Akedah Servant Complex: The Soteriological Linkage of Genesis 22 and Isaiah 53 in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Writings*, Leuven/Paris/ Walpole, Peeters.

⁶¹ Kuruvilla (2013: 217). Mikhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael's quote is also discussed and cited in Levenson, Jon. D 2012, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity & Islam*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, p. 94.

⁶² Kuruvilla (2013: 217).

However, Christian scholars have also drawn similar conclusions to these Jewish perspectives, though concerning the sacrifice of Christ. Yet unlike Greidanus they have simply moved in one step from Genesis 22 to John 1:29 without a complete RHP and without revealing argumentation for this move.⁶⁴ With explanatory distinction, Vladimir Lossky states,

The entire sacrificial tradition of Israel, beginning with the sacrifice of Isaac replaced by a ram, culminates here [Calvary].⁶⁵

Lossky spells out a broad RHP (start to finish) from the *Akedah* to Calvary incorporating the entire Israelite sacrificial system. Greidanus gives a useful progression, while Lossky clearly defines its start point. His bookends find support from a Jewish perspective (with Christocentric reorientation), and Levenson's own assessment of Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael's quotation regarding the *Akedah* and Passover is helpful. He states,

The verse cited in Exodus speaks of the blood of the paschal lamb, offered in protection of the Israelite firstborn in Egypt. To the rabbinic interpreter, however, that blood is only a cipher for the real blood of redemption – the blood of the *Akedah*.⁶⁶

It is interesting that rabbinic sources find continuity between Genesis 22 and Exodus 12 while Kuruvilla doesn't see the link (even ignoring the 'blood of redemption' link which Christians appropriate to Christ). This canonical link centres not around repetition of linguistics but on a strong narrative resonant repetition which happens when one text/event is so apparent when reading another text/event that the interpreter cannot ignore the narrative fit and overlay. Greidanus effectively follows a similar resonant path to Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, while Kuruvilla works largely with the text and not with resonance.

However, it is important to ask from a narrative Pentateuchal perspective what the average Hebrew in Exodus 12 might have thought when asked to slaughter a lamb and place its blood on the doorposts for the protection of the firstborn. In contrast to Greidanus', Kuruvilla's interpretation of Exodus 12 has no anti-type of the *Akedah* to draw on and therefore this brings with it a set of random and unexplained ritual actions to perform. To perform these without understanding in effect becomes a 'get out of Egypt free card' that functions as 'salvation by numbers' (i.e. like 'painting by numbers'). Yet, the Passover may well be seen as presented to readers of the Pentateuch with a prior foundational knowledge of the *Akedah*. As the Hebrews prepared to return to Canaan (the

⁶³ Kuruvilla (2013: 217).

⁶⁴ For example Stevenson in Stevenson/Wright (2005: 9-10). It is also common for preachers to make this link via temple sacrifice in two steps, but it is rare to directly state the *Akedah* as the starting place of Passover/temple sacrifices and this RHP (e.g. Paul Washer and Roy Hession (ISB)).

⁶⁵ Lossky, Vladimir 1978, *Orthodox Theology: an introduction*, New York, SVS Press, P.110.

⁶⁶ Levenson (2012: 94).

land that one day would have *Moriah*/temple as its centre of state and worship), they killed the Passover lamb, just as Abraham had killed the ram provided by God instead of his firstborn son Isaac (only son). Read in this way the Hebrews can be seen as following an example of trust in God in extreme adversity, and the exodus becomes a test of faith for each family as they follow in Abraham's footsteps. From this they would have known they could rely on God in this situation and would have rushed to sacrifice the Passover lambs and save their firstborn sons. Kuruvilla has declined these significant canonical narrative parallels between Genesis 22 and Exodus 12, where the *Akedah* actually makes sense of the Passover because the *Akedah* is the source, and the Passover its progression.

While Kuruvilla may claim such a possibility as 'anachronistic,' the way the final form of the Pentateuch presents events this is not so. The Hebrews of the Exodus are portrayed to the reader as leaving Egypt long after the *Akedah* has taken place, and the reader is well aware of this. Isaac's sacrifice clearly may well have been seen as efficacious to some,⁶⁷ yet from a Christian perspective this imagery would be fulfilled in time.

Significantly, at no point does Greidanus link the ram as a type, with the death of Christ at Passover time to support his RHP of a typology of the Passover.⁶⁸ Such a move may well be considered a stronger finish for a possible Christocentric RHP link into the NT to support a Passover typology. John 1:29 could certainly support such a move, announcing His mission 'to take away the sin of the world' as an intermediate step, while the final RHP step now becomes the Passion at Passover time. This is a more complete RHP because it moves to finishing an RHP at the sacrifice of Christ in the Gospels rather than at the start point of Christ's ministry.

b) John's 'The Lamb of God'

Greidanus' RHP moves ultimately to Christ in the title of the 'Lamb of God' (John 1:29, 36). This is a commonly used link to Christ when preaching the *Akedah*. However, as scholars and interpreters have much discussed the possible OT referents of this title (unique to John's Gospel) we will not dwell on the debate here.⁶⁹

2) Promise-Fulfilment

Greidanus gives only a short paragraph for the above heading, as follows,

⁶⁷ See Levenson (2012: 94).

⁶⁸ Mat. 26:2, 28; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7.

⁶⁹ Preaching examples include Edmund P. Clowney 2003, *Preaching Christ in All Scripture*, Illinois, Crossway, p. 78, Randles, and Johnson (ISB). On the origins/referents to 'Lamb of God' see Morris, Leon 1994, 'The Lamb of God', *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, Michigan, Eerdmans, pp. 129-143. Also, Moberly (2000: 107, ft. 52) and Kuruvilla (2013: 219).

The covenant blessings (vv 17-18) contain promises for Abraham and his seed. Especially the promise “through your offspring [seed] all nations on earth will be blessed” (v18, TNIV) is fulfilled in Jesus Christ (cf. Mat 28:19). But since this way of promise-fulfilment is not directly related to the theme of the narrative, it is better not to make it a way to Christ in this sermon.⁷⁰

It is hard to fathom why Greidanus does not see that a central covenant text, which many interpret in terms of ‘promise’ (22: 15-18) as functioning as ‘promise-fulfilment.’ In fact it is difficult to read the quotation above without seeing it as two opposing sentences. It is very common for scholars to see the text as holding to a central theme of covenant and promised blessing.⁷¹ This could easily be incorporated into a RHP reading of Genesis 22.

His statement is telling, for it shows his commitment to a singular interpretation for preaching which in this case rejects ‘I will bless you’ (promise) in favour of ‘the Lord provides’. This is similar to him driving to this same point and rejecting the importance of ‘the test’ and ‘fear of the Lord.’ Greidanus has moved straight to the *Akedah*’s outcome (‘the Lord will provide’) but in doing so he has highlighted one aspect of the promises (‘will provide’) and missing the central importance of the covenant in terms of blessing.

3) Typology [Christocentric]

With regards to typology of Christ Greidanus states, ‘there is no agreement on whether it is Abraham, Isaac, or the ram.’⁷² This lack of consensus is certainly evident in interpretation and HR preachers who used Christocentric typology.

Greidanus’ own conclusion is that the ram, provided in Isaac’s stead in 22:13, is a type and not Isaac or Abraham. We will look at these three in turn with reference to how these ‘types’ are seen or alluded to in the NT. If typological use of the *Akedah* of a character/s is evident in the NT then there is an excellent precedent to follow suit.

Abraham - Greidanus does not see Abraham as a type of Christ and it becomes clear from his critique of Walter Brueggemann’s interpretation why. Though Brueggemann does not specifically use the word ‘type’, he presents Abraham as follows,

⁷⁰ Greidanus (2007: 202).

⁷¹ Scott Hahn states, ‘The binding of Isaac and God’s sworn covenant oath form the climax of the Abrahamic narrative in Genesis 12-22... From a canonical perspective, Genesis 22 is the culmination of a long process of divine covenanting.’ See Hahn, Scott W. 2009, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfilment of God’s Saving Promises*, New Haven/London, Yale University Press, p.123. Also on blessings and promise see Moberly (2000: 78 &120-27).

⁷² Greidanus (2007: 202).

The life of Abraham, then, is set by this text in the midst of the contradiction between the *testing* of God and the *providing* of God... The dialectic of testing and providing, of taking and giving, may be linked appropriately to the reality of Jesus of Nazareth... The crucifixion of Jesus is the ultimate expression of the testing of God. Like Abraham, Jesus in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42) is in a situation where he must choose... Jesus like Abraham, trusts only the promise... The resurrection is the miracle by which God provides new life in a situation where only death is anticipated. The dialectic of testing/providing in our narrative becomes the dialectic of *crucifixion/resurrection* in the faith of the church.⁷³

Greidanus' rejection of such a position is telling. He states,

I judge that the dialectic which places the same weight on God's testing as on God's providing is a foreign structure that does not fit the text. In v1, the narrator simply informs Israel, which knew of God's prohibition against child sacrifice, whereas in the narrative he puts all the emphasis on "God provides."⁷⁴

Firstly 22:1 frames the narrative as a whole. Secondly, once again we see that Greidanus' playing down of the test as 'patriarchal only' (due to assumption that 'the test' cannot possibly be read as real because God has prohibited child sacrifice), now plays significantly into his interpretation regarding Christocentric type.

In light of this it is useful to reassess Abraham as type from our argued perspective of the test being seen as real and Abraham as the central character of Genesis 22. While bearing this in mind we will look at Greidanus' rejection of Brueggemann's position along with the similar position of Gerhard von Rad, who famously noted Abraham as being typologically paralleled with Christ on the 'road to Godforsakenness.'⁷⁵ In Brueggemann and von Rad's interpretations we see the two primary ways Abraham is seen to be a type of Christ, a) total obedience to the task, and b) the trauma of Gethsemane. If one views von Rad's interpretation of Genesis 22 that is specifically angled towards the preacher we find both perspectives in one statement,

Abraham's travel leads to a Godforsakenness which first was fully borne in Christ on the night when he was betrayed.⁷⁶

The assimilation of Abraham's 'flint set' obedience with that of Christ is a narrative parallel rather than being textually explicit (though there may be some textual allusion as we shall see). However, the parallel is certainly strong, and it can be read with the added weight of the tradition concerning

⁷³ Brueggemann, Walter 1982, *Genesis: A Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Atlanta, John Knox, pp. 192-4. Quoted in Greidanus (2007: 202, ft. 20).

⁷⁴ Greidanus (2007: 202, ft. 20).

⁷⁵ Von Rad, Gerhard 1972, *Genesis: Third Edition*, London, SCM, p. 244. Von Rad's Christocentric move here is a stand-out Christocentric statement in his interpretation which, this apart, is based in OT form criticism/general hermeneutics.

⁷⁶ Gerhard, von Rad 1977, *Biblical Interpretations in Preaching*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, p. 36.

the region/mountain of *Moriah* being Jerusalem (with Golgotha in close proximity). However, the typological parallel between Abraham's assumed traumatic journey (Genesis 22 says nothing of this, it is a natural human conclusion to read trauma into the event) may be evident within the passion narratives. Raymond E. Brown states,

#2 Abraham was told by God, "Take along your son... and go to the land of Moriah." Abraham took along (*paralambanein*) two young men servants and his son Isaac (22:2-3).

#3 On arriving, Abraham said to the young donkey; I and the little boy shall go on farther; and having worshiped, we shall return to you" (22:5)⁷⁷

'In Matt 26:36 (but not in Mark 14:32), as Jesus enters Gethsemane, he says to the body of disciples, "Sit in this place [*kathisate autou*] until going away, I pray there"; and then he takes along (*paralambanein*) Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. Good linguistic parallels may be found in the Gen 22 story as exhibited in ##2-3 above. Yet notice that the parallel is more between Jesus and Abraham than between Jesus and Isaac.⁷⁸

While Brown notes the possibility of linguistic allusion to the *Akedah* within the Passion, this cannot be claimed as a certain NT typological use of an OT character (as, for example, John 3:14's use of Numbers 21:1-9 - bronze snake in the wilderness can). Yet we find that interpreters from both the academy and pulpit have often found the narrative parallels between Abraham and Christ simply too great to ignore.⁷⁹

A blurring between Abraham and Isaac as types is not necessarily a problem that needs to be forced apart. Wilhelm Vischer reveals a three layered broad typology,

Moriah... is signified, without as it were looking through a window into the far distance to see the only begotten Son whom the Father loved following the path of the passion from the Mount of Olives through Gethsemane as the Lamb who bears the sin of the world.⁸⁰

Randles too preaches Genesis 22 with a similarly broad typology, first noting Abraham as a type, then Isaac, and as he moves to the ram, he notes that again 'the typology changes.'⁸¹

J. Glyn Owen reveals Abraham's typology with force as he moves this typology past Gethsemane, he states,

⁷⁷ Brown (1993: 1437).

⁷⁸ Brown (1993: 1441-2).

⁷⁹ While von Rad and Brueggemann have shown this in their academic work, other preachers who also have cited Abraham as a type include: Bill Randles (*God will Provide Himself a lamb* - ISB), Peter Steffens (*The Binding of Isaac: 'When God asks for you for everything'* - ISB), and Fleming Rutledge's sermon *The Future of God* (in Rutledge, Fleming 2011, *And God Spoke to Abraham: Preaching from the Old Testament*, Michigan, Eerdmans, p. 67. Rutledge specifically uses von Rad's 'Godforsakenness' parallel.

⁸⁰ Vischer (1949: 143).

⁸¹ Bill Randles (ISB).

This is the umpteenth time that God has promised but this time he is saying it at the point of Abraham's self-crucifixion... Abraham was crucified on Moriah.⁸²

The test is Abraham's, and while Isaac is traumatically involved, it can be reasoned that Abraham's future existence is on the line just as much as Isaac's/Israel's (such is the weight of importance of offspring in patriarchal texts/times). The death of Isaac also equals the death of Abraham in the narrative. That said, Glyn Owen has perhaps overreached. The *Akedah* certainly involves Abraham's self-denial but crucifixion language seems most relevant concerning Isaac and the ram (this would especially be the case if combined with a typology of Father and Son - for it may well be seen as suggestive of patripassionism).

We have seen Brown's possible linguistic parallels between the *Akedah* and the Passion, and noted that the lines between Abraham and Isaac as individuals somewhat blur with typological consequence. However, the primary strength of Abraham as a type of Christ is to be found in his status as the textual primary character of the *Akedah* and the strong narrative parallels that can be seen as depicting Christ's undeterred walk of obedience to Golgotha (Jerusalem) just as Abraham also denied himself to take hold of the covenant promises.

Isaac – Isaac as a Christocentric type is the most common type noted and preached from Genesis 22. So many have simply seen the narrative parallels of the son/Son dying with the father's/Father's deep involvement. Typological examples of God the Father and Son abound,⁸³ while examples of Isaac alone as type are also common.⁸⁴ However, we have seen that Greidanus sees Isaac's role as a type of Israel, and because of this he does not see him as representative of Christ simultaneously. While this move keeps these two understandings of type neatly separated interpretationally, it could be argued that as Isaac is assimilated with Israel and its survival,⁸⁵ and with Christ being seen as 'the

⁸² J. Glyn Owen (ISB).

⁸³ Examples of this combined typology of Father and Son include, Peter K. Stevenson's sermon, 'The cost of a father's commitment: Genesis 22:1-19' in Stevenson, Peter K and Wright Stephen I. 2005, *Preaching the Atonement*, London/New York, T & T Clark, p. 8, 13. Here Stevenson notes in his methodological discussion of types that, '... the closeness of Abraham and Isaac in the story has awakened in Christian readers, from the New Testament writers onwards, the thought of the closeness of Father and Son and mission of God the Holy Trinity.' His supporting NT verses are: Mt 3:17; 17:5; John 1:18; 3:16; 5:17; 5:20; 10:18; Rom. 8:32, and the Gethsemane verses of Mat. 26:39; Mark 14:35 and Luke 22:41. Thus Stevenson makes extensive use of verses that shows Father or Son, or both. Also see Rutledge (2011: 67-8) and McDonald (ISB).

⁸⁴ Whitefield (2012: 92-3). Spurgeon's sermon 'A Type and its Teaching', in Spurgeon (1980: 361-370). Also, Johnson, Missler and Focht (ISB).

⁸⁵ See 'The Sacrifice of Isaac: A Survivor's story' in Wiesel (1976: 61-86). Here Wiesel notes the assimilation of Isaac with Israel as 'survivor.' Similarly, yet with even greater force, Fleming Rutledge titles her sermon on Gen. 22 'The Future of God'. See Rutledge (2011: 61-8).

personified true, obedient Israel'⁸⁶, this combined typology could make a coherent move. However, Greidanus' position is as follows,

A major problem with this position is that Isaac did not die on the altar. In other words, The Isaac-Christ typology breaks down on the decisive parallel. On the other hand, the ram that was offered does contain this crucial parallel; it was killed... it was offered "instead of" Isaac – thus a substitute offering, a ransom. Therefore, not Isaac, who represents Israel, but the ram is a type of Christ.⁸⁷

Greidanus' position here is perhaps problematic, as it might be suggested that if one is to progress too far down a route that requires types to be an exact mirror of Christ in their 'crucial parallels' of course a four legged ovine would indeed be a problematic type for a human, just as much as Isaac's lack of physical demise. In reality all types will exhibit both continuity and discontinuity with Christ, and this imperfect nature may be considered vital as a forward pointer to Christ the greater. Chrysostom uses the language of Hebrews to talk of types in Genesis 22 as he states 'how everything was prefigured in shadow'.⁸⁸ Such an approach of 'shadow to substance' is perhaps a more helpful way to look at types in general rather than trying to match 'decisive parallels' in poignant moments, i.e. types often paint pictures using shadowy impressionism rather than with bold outlines. For some preachers Greidanus' typological discontinuity is foundational in seeing Isaac as a type where such a contrast of 'shadow and substance' is seen. That he lived but Christ died is seen as a parabolic prefiguring/foretelling of Golgotha when the ultimate test was taken on, yet without divine intervention.⁸⁹

If we return to the suggestion of Isaac being 'as good as dead,' we find that this could, in effect, bring the 'decisive parallel' for Greidanus to see Isaac as a type of Christ. If we look at possible NT allusions to Isaac as type one does not have to travel beyond Romans 8:32 to find considerable support for this.⁹⁰ Greidanus does incorporate John 3:16 into his sermon (a common NT reference when

⁸⁶ Davies and Allison state that 'For Matthew, 'Son of God' must have to do in part with Jesus as the personified embodiment of true, obedient Israel.' In, Davies, W.D. and Allison, D.C. 1988, *Matthew 1-7: International Critical Commentary*, London/New York, T&T Clark, p. 263-4. Also see Kennedy, Joel 2008, *The Recapitulation of Israel*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, pp. 140-142, esp. 141.

⁸⁷ Greidanus (2007: 203).

⁸⁸ Chrysostom 1961, 'Homily 47 [Genesis 22]' in, *The Fathers of the Church: Vol 87*, Washington DC, Catholic University of America Press, pp. 21-2. See Hebrews 10:1 with 11:13, also Colossians 2:17.

⁸⁹ Rutledge (2008: 67-8).

⁹⁰ Romans 8:32 is generally thought as being the strongest possible allusion to Genesis 22 by scholars. For example, Moberly notes that this was '...historically most influential. Whether or not Paul intended an allusion to Genesis 22 is unclear, but Paul's language naturally lends itself to a typological parallel between Abraham and Isaac and God the Father and God the Son.' He also states that the issue of Paul being influenced by the *Akedah* 'is uncertain primarily because there are not the precise verbal links that one might have expected. The Hebrew adjective qualifying 'son' in Genesis 22:2, 12, 16, *yahid*, is appropriately rendered by Paul's *idios*, but the LXX, which might be expected to have influenced Paul had he had Genesis 22 in mind, uses *agapetos*.' See, Moberly (2000: 133 – main text and ft. 1). That said Peter Stevenson, while being cautious to claim no

preaching Genesis 22) and in so doing he uses a broader typology than is his claim of only the ram being a type. He effectively links Isaac with the ram as a type of Christ in concluding that ‘the Lord provided His only son for you.’⁹¹ In stating this Greidanus probably does intend to purposefully allude to Isaac as type. However, his statement in the context of the *Akedah* implies Isaac as a type for his listeners, and only his word choice of ‘Lord’ rather than ‘Father’ keeps him from further implication of a combined typology, Abraham and Isaac as Father and Son (as may well be implied with conscious authorial intent in Romans 8:32 and John 3:16).

Such allusion, conscious or otherwise, again reveals the difficulty of claiming a singular type, as well as the overwhelming parallels between the *Akedah* and the Passion which interpreters often find impossible to ignore, no matter their presented interpretations.

Therefore, concerning Isaac as a type it might be suggested that, just as Abraham’s own identification, sacrifice and life is tied up with the near sacrifice of Isaac, so too is Isaac’s identity with that of the ram in Genesis 22: 13. In the narrative both animal and Isaac switch back and forth as the object of sacrifice. In 22:2 Isaac is to be sacrificed (known by God, Abraham and the narrator/reader). In 22:7 Isaac’s words lay the basis for him as being seen as entwined with the animal as he shows that he is expecting an animal burnt offering (“where is the lamb”). Isaac is seen initially as intended to take the place of the animal. In 22:8, while Abraham and the reader still assume Isaac is to be sacrificed, the wording is now ambiguous as to whether Abraham has just told Isaac a ‘white lie’⁹² or indeed if Isaac has just understood that he will take the place of the animal. This ambiguity becomes a certainty (22:9) - he is indeed taking the animal’s place. Isaac remains in the animal’s place until the divine intervention (22:11) now means that the ram can be sacrificed in his ‘stead.’ Thus the text may be read as showing Isaac and the ram, entwined in role and thus typologically problematic to separate, as Greidanus shows (unintentionally perhaps).

Ram - As we have seen, Greidanus argues against Isaac and Abraham as types. This choice emanates from him seeing the lamb provided as being the primary focus of the text, and this fits well with his typology of the Passover (RHP). The focus of the text informs his choice of type, and his RHP finds

more than allusion does note one linguistic linking (at least in root) between the two. This is ‘the same verb “spare” in both Rom. 8:32 and the LXX of Gen.22:12. See Stevenson in Stevenson/Wright (2005: 4-5).

⁹¹ While John 3:16 does not carry the same weight of textual parallels as Rom. 8:32 it has often been seen by preachers as concerning Gen.22 (e.g. Greidanus (1976: 7-8), Whitefield (2012: 92) Stevenson (see Stevenson/Wright (2005: 16)). The use of the bronze serpent as a type in John 3:14 in such close proximity to John 3:16 may well be suggested as having some bearing upon what the fourth evangelist may well be doing in 3:16 in terms of seeing Isaac as a type of Christ.

⁹² Greidanus just asks if this might be a ‘white lie’ but quotes Westermann who suggests that ‘Abraham refers Isaac to God as the one who will answer the question... He throws the ball back in God’s court, so to speak.’ See Greidanus (2007: 209), citing Westermann, Claus 1985, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*, Minneapolis, Augsburg, p. 359.

agreement with this choice in John 1:29. Therefore, his main OT textual theme sets the foundation for his choice of type as being the ram (rather than the NT setting the precedent) and there is of course solid NT support for a sacrificial ram/lamb as a type of Christ beyond John 1:29.⁹³

With Abraham, Isaac and the ram becoming blurred in their identity, and with NT allusion to all three as types of Christ, it might be suggested that Greidanus' view of a singular Christocentric type taken from the *Akedah* does not do full justice to the strength of NT narrative allusion to Golgotha.⁹⁴

Greidanus does note that Chrysostom preaches both Abraham and Isaac as types,

[Isaac] was offered as a burnt offering by his father, and the latter [Abraham] his father surrendered.⁹⁵

Greidanus states that 'although not many would follow Chrysostom... in presenting two figures in one passage as types of Christ, the decision as to who is a type of Christ is by no means resolved today.'⁹⁶ We have seen that Greidanus himself shows some evidence of the struggle in trying to hold to a singular Christocentric type. Indeed Greidanus is hardly alone in alluding to both Isaac and the ram as types in a single sermon.⁹⁷

In light of the above arguments concerning NT typological allusion it is apt to ask if one can argue for a singular type. The desire to de-clutter and simplify the preacher's task in communication is understandable, and of course time can be of the essence which may mean that only one type may be able to be preached. However, if the Genesis 22 narrative blurs the characters in role/s, before we move to find NT allusion to all three types, it would seem only accurate to preach this. Therefore the idea of a single main character and type might well be argued to rob the interpretive preaching of Genesis 22 of a broader and richer palette of characters and typology, as alluded to in Scripture (via conscious authorial intention, or narrative resonance through reader response).

⁹³ John 1:29 (as argued) and Rom. 3:25; 1 Cor. 5:7; Heb.10:5-7; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Rev. 13:8.

⁹⁴ Just as the discontinuity of Isaac (lived) with Christ (died) has been discussed, similarly the seemingly purposed discontinuity (in part) in the text between 'the lamb' (*seh*) in 22: 7-8, and 'ram' (*'ayil*) in 22: 13 has also been interpreted as preachers move to Christocentric type. See again Moberly on this typology in, Moberly (2000: 107, ft. 52). MacDonald for example states, 'I don't believe that the ram was the lamb, because a ram isn't a lamb... the lamb is when the Lord Jesus went to the cross as the lamb at Calvary' (ISB). Further allusion to the ram as a type may well lie in the inclusion of the releasing of Barabbas (meaning 'Son of the Father' (NRSV ft.)) in all four Gospels, i.e. Barabbas is perhaps assimilated with Isaac and is released from the 'altar', leaving Christ as the ram who is sacrificed 'instead.' I am grateful to Rev. Simon Ponsonby for pointing out this possible NT allusion/typology to Gen. 22 in conversation with me.

⁹⁵ Chrysostom in Greidanus (2007: 202).

⁹⁶ Greidanus (2007: 203).

⁹⁷ Focht (ISB).

This leaves us in the unusual situation where NT allusion suggests three different types of Christ in a single passage.⁹⁸ However, these types do not run simultaneously in the narrative as they move from one to another. To summarise the passing of the 'type baton': for three days Abraham sets his face like flint to Jerusalem (*Moriah*) in obedience to God just as Jesus Christ later did in the passion build up, in Gethsemane and in death. Isaac, as good as dead, takes over as type now also in willing submission, Abraham's only son who prefigures the only son of God being nailed to the cross - as a ram, and instead of a ram, offered up on God's altar. With Isaac resurrected, 'in a manner of speaking' the ram then takes the baton; his blood is shed for the guilt/sin of the people which have been laid on him.⁹⁹ In this final move we find that the ram as type reveals Jesus as the completer and finisher of the sacrificial system, one shedding of blood, for many, once and for all (Hebrews 10:9, 12, 14).

The common thread that unites all three types is a sacrifice of the self. Greidanus has driven to his typology of the Passover from the ram in 22:13, yet here we find that such a typology can be found in the self-sacrifice of all three types together as one. This is established within the general hermeneutics and as a result this should inform an understanding of the theme of the entire *Akedah*, i.e. the text may well clearly state that 'fear of God' is the goal of the test (22:12) but the thematic of the narrative only establishes this through the test that operates constantly in terms of complete sacrifice. Interpretatively the one who exhibits faith (fear of God) can only do so in

⁹⁸ An example of a sermon utilising a three-fold typology see Lindsay, J, Scott 2007, 'Sermon: Genesis 22', in *Reformed Perspective Magazine Vol 9*: 52.

⁹⁹ It should be noted that only at the point of the ram offering can there be, canonically speaking, any claim of the *Akedah* as specifically concerning sin (using Lev. 5 & 6, John 1:29). It is unusual to find a preacher claiming Isaac as a sin offering. It has been done, for example Timothy Keller states, 'He [God] asked him [Abraham] to make him [Isaac] a burnt offering. He was calling in Abraham's debt. His son was going to die for the sins of the family.' See Keller, Timothy 2009, *Counterfeit Gods*, London, Hodder& Stoughton, p. 10. However, canonically speaking, this assumes Abraham's knowledge of Levitical sacrifices and it does not take into account the nuance of the narrator's language concerning the utilisation of specific Levitical sacrifices presented in the '*olah*' of Gen. 22:2 (Lev. 1), the unspecific nature of 'lamb' in Gen. 22:7 ('*ayil* meaning 'animal from a flock', see, Moberly 2000: 107, ft. 52) and the ram in Gen. 22:13 (Lev. 5 & 6). Interpretatively a basic overview of sacrificial imagery in Gen. 22 sees a movement from the '*olah*' which is an ascension offering to the satisfaction of God (Lev. 1:13) as a general 'covering' (*kipper*) offering (Lev. 1:4), onto Gen. 22: 7 where the offering is again held in general terms, e.g. *seh* could also determine a thank/well-being offering, male or female (also an ascension offering, Lev. 3: 11, 16) and which like the '*olah*' also allows for a sheep or goat sacrifice (Lev. 1:10; 3:12). Finally in moving to the ram, the imagery is clarified as a 'covering general '*olah*' (male), but added to the ascension offering of covering, the male animal is now possibly associated specifically with guilt as it is specifically called a ram (see, Lev. 5 & 6). Canonical allusion might be evident in Lev 5:16 where we find that *kipper* and '*ayil*' are combined in speaking of guilt offerings. In this, Lev. 1-6 and Gen. 22 both show the same ordering of sacrifices, and a defined concept of guilt (therefore sin) only becomes linguistically possible once the ram is placed on the altar (by canonical implication of the ram). As a result reasons to claim Isaac as being shown as a sin offering are most questionable (especially with regards to Isaac being spared through divine intervention).

covenant with God who expects self-sacrifice and gives this Himself graciously in the ultimate sacrifice – ‘God will provide a lamb.’

It should be noted that with no explicit NT Christocentric typology, and thus only textual allusion to this (technically speaking) a Christocentric typology from the *Akedah* belongs firmly to the category of resonant narrative parallel. It is certainly possible that the NT writers may have consciously alluded to Genesis (particularly in the case of Romans 8:32 and probably John 3:16 also); however, this is hardly a definitive claim and other allusions (such as Gethsemane) may well not be of conscious authorial allusion, but of reader response. Stevenson is helpful here regarding Genesis 22 and its NT parallels that may fall under the heading of ‘reader response’ readings as much as that of ‘conscious authorial intent.’ Stevenson;

To speak of ‘resonance’ or ‘echo’ in the study of literature is to speak of the way in which one text may evoke another. Without explicit quotation – maybe even without direct verbal parallels – theme, phrases, moods can suddenly or gradually strike a reader or hearer as uncannily similar, in a way that can set off potent lines of interpretation. The power of such connections often lies precisely in their obliqueness and understated quality. Further, such echoes may heighten a sense of contrast between texts or stories, as much as a sense of similarity. The study of ‘intertextuality’ may be extremely fruitful for Christians wrestling with the issue of the Old Testament’s relationship to the New.

It is neither wise nor profitable to build great edifices of doctrine upon resonances or to make strong claims that the connections were ‘intended’ by human author(s). Thus in drawing attention to resonances between Genesis 22 and the New Testament I am not claiming that the author(s) of Genesis had extraordinary insight, or that the New Testament authors were fully aware of these resonances. I am simply suggesting that within the diverse body of literature that we call Scripture there are links between different parts which can be pursued for our insight and instruction, which may be channels of God’s revelation and give depth to our preaching.¹⁰⁰

The decision to interpret the OT Christocentrically using the NT’s possible allusions in the realm of ‘resonance’ and ‘narrative parallel’ is primarily a decision that remains a choice of the individual interpreter. However, it might be suggested that, having seen so much possible allusion to the *Akedah* within the NT, to reject it all would deprive Christocentric biblical interpretation of much good bounty indeed, as is clear here from interaction with vibrant readings by scholar and preacher alike.

¹⁰⁰ Stevenson in Stevenson and Wright (2005: 7). For a more extensive interaction with concept of ‘echo’ and its significance within the NT see Hays, Richard B. 1989, *Echoes in Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press.

4) Analogy

This is a category that Greidanus does not focus on in his own interpretation, as there are stronger ways to move to the Christocentric. However, as an example of this move he states,

For example, focusing on the goal of this narrative for Israel: As God through this narrative assured Israel that their faithful covenant LORD can be trusted to provide for their redemption, so Jesus assures his followers that their faithful covenant LORD can be trusted to provide for their redemption.¹⁰¹

Greidanus also states that ‘this analogy would have to be supported by New Testament references’¹⁰² and this is suggested to support what he sees is a relatively weak way to move to Christ. This is because Greidanus’ HR method generally brings with it a solid historical claim (RHP) spanning the OT and NT of salvation history (typology is seen as a part of this move/foundation rather than being analogy under a different heading). This brings a foundational biblical and historical claim to his method, whereas an analogy cannot function in such a way because it is able to leave congregations wondering if simply a parallel illustration has been suggested. That said, one of the most common ways to preach the *Akedah* is to present a parallel analogy where Christ is seen as Isaac and God the Father as Abraham, but without a claim of the narrative purposefully including this as a prophetic event that is recapitulated in Calvary. Greidanus avoids this move in typology, while he cannot do so in analogy, thus his suggestion of it as a weaker move.

5) Longitudinal Themes

We have seen that Greidanus is fully aware just how intertwined his seven special hermeneutic moves are. His longitudinal theme is substitutionary atonement and he notes its intrinsic linking Passover typology,

...substitutionary atonement... can be traced from the ram offered “instead of” Isaac, to the passover lambs slain in Egypt instead of Israel’s firstborn (Exod 12:12-13), to lambs and other animals slain to redeem the firstborn in Israel (Exod 13:13-15; 34:20; Num 18:15), to the daily burnt offerings of lambs so Israel might live (Exod 29:38-42), to the sin offerings slain for the sins committed by God’s people (Lev 4-7). Continuing into the New Testament, Jesus proclaims that he came “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). This idea is echoed in many New Testament letters: for example, 1 Peter 1:18-19 [and] 1 John 4:9-10.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Greidanus (2007: 203).

¹⁰² Noting John 10:28 and Matt 16:18, in Greidanus (2007: 203-4).

¹⁰³ Greidanus (2007: 204).

6) New Testament References

We have already begun to see how Greidanus uses NT references for his interpretation and we have viewed in particular his former use (1976) of Hebrews 11:7-19 and his later rejection of both this text and James 2:21-22 as he does not see 'faith' as a central facet of Genesis 22, or as easy to move to Christ from.

We have also noted above his NT support for both 'typology of the Passover' and 'historical-redemptive progression,' and most importantly concerning this we have noted his use of John 1:29, 'the lamb of God.'

Further to these references Greidanus adds the following,

Matthew 3:17 (par. Luke 3:22), God says of Jesus at his baptism, "This is my Son, the Beloved," possibly an allusion to Isaac being Abraham's beloved ("your son, your only son, whom you love"). See also Matthew 17:5, "This is my Son, the Beloved."
John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his *only* Son." ... God himself made the supreme sacrifice which he prevented Abraham from making: he gave his only Son.
Romans 8:32, "He [God] who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us," may be an allusion to Genesis 22:16, "Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son."¹⁰⁴

In Greidanus' 1976 sermon he moves from Genesis 22 using the typology of the Passover via Isaiah 53 and onto John 1:10 – 'the lamb of God.' We have also noted that he uses Hebrews 11:1, 17-19 in this early sermon, but apart from the only mention from the verses he cites above is that of John 3:16 (in both of his alternative endings in the sermon). While this infers Isaac as the type of Christ, having established him as a type of Israel and the ram as the Christocentric type, this is a step outside of Greidanus' projected methodology. This appears in both his exegesis and sermon.¹⁰⁵

What is interesting here is that despite Greidanus arguing for the ram as a type and Isaac as representative of Israel, he still makes the classic Church Fathers' move which sees Calvary as a recapitulation of Genesis 22. His suggestions above concerning NT verses that allude to Genesis 22 support Isaac as a type of Christ (which may be why they are not used extensively).

7) Contrast

Like analogy contrast is a possible route for preaching Christ for Greidanus, but he does not see this as a strong enough move to make with so many other Christocentric possibilities. He does however, outline how it might be applied theoretically. It should be noted that contrast is built on his typology

¹⁰⁴ Greidanus (2007: 204-5).

¹⁰⁵ Greidanus (1976: 7-8) and Greidanus (207: 211).

of the Passover and he does not engage with the life/death contrast of Isaac/Christ. Again he uses the NT to bolster this weaker route to Christ. He states,

There is a major contrast of course... Abraham offered a ram “instead of his son.” Today we no longer offer animals for our lives. The reason for this contrast is Christ: Jesus offered his life “once and for all” (Heb 10:1-8).¹⁰⁶

Conclusion concerning Greidanus’ general and special hermeneutics

Firstly, regarding Greidanus’ methodology, exposition and preaching of Genesis 22, it is important to note that vast theological ground is covered in a couple of chapters and eight pages of a sermon and it should be taken into account that if one considers even the longest sermon today the preacher’s task is always content restricted by time. Greidanus drives to a well worked-out theme in both his general and special hermeneutics. Yet ultimately it has been shown that in some instances this is executed with an approach that is too singular, to the exclusion of some textual points of significance. In particular we have noted that,

- 1) His textual analysis that forms a theme that promotes ‘provide’ over ‘test’ and ‘fear’, does not engage fully this important word play trio. Further textual analysis may well have presented Greidanus with Abraham as the most central character (even though Isaac was certainly identified with by Israel). Isaac as central figure means downplaying of ‘the test’ of Abraham and this sets Greidanus on a path that results in him not being on the lookout for a reason/outcome of ‘the test’ for Abraham (‘provides’ being the giving of God’s grace beyond a successful test completed). Thus he omits the importance of ‘the fear of God’/faith. The resultant lack of focus on ‘fear of God’/faith also means that he does not engage with what is going on in Hebrews 11:17-19 and James 2:21, in terms of the relationship of these texts with the *Akedah*. This link to Abraham as an exemplar of faith (i.e. the explicit double witness of two independent NT writers that show Abraham to be a ‘type of faith’), thus becomes an anomaly regarding interpretation of the *Akedah* for Greidanus. This shows just how important one’s general hermeneutics in the entire interpretation process are, and it also, to some extent, calls into question the concept of an OT general hermeneutic move in isolation from the NT. It is clear that canonically the NT sheds considerable light on the *Akedah* via these two texts, but yet also a more solid engagement with the Genesis 22 text would have revealed the text’s own stated outcomes (‘fear of God’) should have drawn similar conclusions as the writers of Hebrews and James have made.

¹⁰⁶ Greidanus (2007: 205).

- 2) We have also seen that driving to a singular 'type of Christ' is problematic in this case. It certainly keeps things neat for a preacher, but this should be avoided as a confident claim regarding Genesis 22. This is because the NT witness does seem to allude to three types (Abraham, Isaac and ram) within its text as its writers utilise a strong narrative resonance between the *Akedah* and Golgotha. Therefore, this is simply a case of incorporating all three into a sermon (if time permits), or indeed choosing one, while stating that there are indeed other ways to see the text.
- 3) While Greidanus holds to his methodology well, it has been importantly noted that, like many, he just cannot help seeing the *Akedah* recapitulated in Calvary. This often used default position is indeed an intriguing part of the *Akedah* reception history, and one could be quick to declare his inconsistency. However, this move is significant because if ultimately an OT text is read and the reaction is, "that is so much like Golgotha, I see the cross in it" surely such a resonance is a valid canonical hermeneutic point of reader-response? Greidanus grasps the resonance, and yet awkwardly it does not fit with his typology. However, he still utilises it. Therefore, it might be suggested that indeed the passing of the typology baton in the triple typology presented here would bring a consistency to his interpretation. This would also aid listeners towards concentrating on personal sermon application rather than being confused by some contradiction concerning typology.
- 4) Greidanus' RHP carries significant weight in interpretation as a method because it specifically interprets from a foundational place for the listener where they can see that God is salvifically acting across history as a purposed interaction with humanity. His utilisation of a typology of the Passover is weighty, consistent and is generally missed/not used by other HR preachers. His methodology leaves the listener with no doubt in their mind as to how the OT culminates in fulfilment in the NT. His method places the listener at ease as to the purposes of God through canon and text. In this we find a smooth, multi-stepped, transition for preaching Christ from OT to NT.¹⁰⁷ In terms of weaknesses of methodology, in this case there are two main omissions: a) there is some OT linguistic analysis that is missed (the focus of Abraham in almost every verse, the missed word play triad, and therefore the lack of interaction with 'fear of God'), and b) a lack of engagement with NT witness regarding: firstly, explicit texts (faith), which could have helpfully informed his general hermeneutics, and secondly, NT textual allusions which if fully unpacked could have informed his Christocentric move with a wider typology.

¹⁰⁷ His 'analogy' movement to Christ aside.

Chapter Four

Kuruvilla's method demonstrated using Genesis 22

Turning to Kuruvilla's interpretation of Genesis 22 in exegesis and preaching, we will once again follow the author's own headings as found in his 2014 commentary on Genesis.¹

It should be noted that, due to the comparatively straightforward nature of Kuruvilla's Christiconic move to Christ-likeness, primary weight in this section will be focussed on his general hermeneutics. Kuruvilla's Christiconic move will be further critiqued, with regards to its application in practice, by comparison with Greidanus' Christocentric special hermeneutic (chapter five).

Kuruvilla's Christiconic method is unique. This means that similar sermons and directly relevant comparative scholars are indeed rare. Therefore, it is not possible here to critique and expand upon his interpretation in the same way as with Greidanus where other HR interpreters/preachers were brought in. However, while sermon references/comparisons (in particular) will not feature so significantly within this chapter, scholars and interpreters of relevance on individual points will still of course be utilised as we engage with Kuruvilla's interpretation.

Kuruvilla's preached sermon *Ace the Test*² is structured using the following three alliterated points

- 1) Expect God's fire
- 2) Experience God's faithfulness
- 3) Exhibit God's fear³

These will be referred to in this section.

General Hermeneutics

Kuruvilla gives his overarching 'theological focus' of Genesis 22 as follows,

Faith in God's promises and his word – a faith liable to be tested – is a supreme love/fear of God that trumps every other allegiance and that manifests in self-sacrificial obedience (22:1-19).⁴

This 'theological focus' is then set out in detail under the following five headings:

- 1) Faith in God's promises and his word is required from the child of God, and such a faith is liable to be tested.

¹ Kuruvilla (2008) – ISB, and Bibliography of, *Primary Sources/Texts - Abraham Kuruvilla*.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Kuruvilla (2014: 251-52).

- 2) The fear of God is to be demonstrated by God's children, involving self-sacrificial trust in God's promises and wholehearted obedience to his word.
- 3) The love of God's people for God brooks no rival claim for their love, whatever its object.
- 4) The love of God/fear of God trumps every other allegiance.
- 5) Demonstration of faith in God's promises and his word results in divine blessing /reward.⁵

Each of Kuruvilla's headings will be looked at in turn. In so doing, the position of Greidanus already seen and the arguments formed from the critique of his work, will be referred to at times - thus avoiding extensive repetition.

1) Faith in God's promises and his word is required from the child of God, and such a faith is liable to be tested.

For Kuruvilla there is no sense that 'the test' is 'only' a test, or 'patriarchal only'. In fact the whole application of his sermon is based on 'the test' as being seen as real for readers of the *Akedah*, for Abraham, and any possible assumption that a 'get out' is coming is far from Kuruvilla's mind (as is the need for interaction with the concept of child sacrifice). Kuruvilla's message is that Christian believers should indeed 'expect God's fire' ('the test'). Kuruvilla's position on this has effectively already previously been argued for (chapter three). However, there are two specific aspects of Kuruvilla's understanding of 'the test' that are important to note here: a) Use of the narrative's co-text, and b) The logical conclusive outcome of his presentation of an extreme test for the believer. We shall look at each point in turn.

a) Use of the narrative's co-text

Kuruvilla's reading of 'the test' comes from both the Genesis 22 text and the co-text of the passage i.e. the wider Abrahamic narrative. We have previously seen that Greidanus also makes significant use of the co-text as he presents the link of Genesis 12 and 22. In doing so he focuses on narrative structure and repeated words. Kuruvilla does not present a detailed chiasmic structure here but he notes the linking of Genesis 12 and 22 (the giving up of past and future) with a table of parallels linking the two texts.⁶ He also adds to this a significant use of the theme of Abraham's faith (lack of), as his interpretation of the wider narrative works in conjunction with his interpretation of Genesis 22, and vice versa.

In this Kuruvilla unravels the stumbling faith journey of Abraham in both exposition and sermon. We have seen that Genesis 22:1, "After these things" can be interpreted as referring to chapter 21

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Kuruvilla (2014: 255).

(Greidanus), but Kuruvilla interprets it as referring to the whole Abrahamic saga. This interpretation seems most likely because the repetition of *lek-lekā* does seem to point all the way back to Genesis 12.

To summarise Kuruvilla's interpretation of Abraham's stumbling walk of faith and failure: - there is the 'stepping out' in faith of Genesis 12, 'in order to secure a blessing that would, in great part, come through an heir (12:1-3)',⁷

...but one notices that he took Lot his nephew, even though the divine word called for separation from relatives and father's house. Was Abraham thinking of Lot as a likely heir?... Later, perhaps still holding on to the hope that his nephew Lot would be chosen heir, Abram gives him the choicest portion of land... The Patriarch *was* wrong, for the descendants of Lot would become enemies of the descendants of Abram (19:38)...⁸

Kuruvilla then cites Abraham's lack of trust in God in 12:9-10 by passing Sarah off as his sister saying, 'Would God not keep his promise about the seed?...Did he need to worry about his own life, and even put his wife's well being in jeopardy?'⁹ Further to this Kuruvilla shows how again 'faithlessness characterised Abraham's response to God' as he 'resorted to compromise'¹⁰ with Sarah and took the provision of an heir into his own hands with the Hagar and Ishmael saga (16:2, despite reiterated promises from God (15:5-21)).¹¹ In Genesis 20 once more 'God had to intervene to set things straight' as 'Abraham palmed his wife off as his sister... again'. In Kuruvilla's sermon he states that Abraham's response to Abimelech's challenge 'was a classic case of self-incrimination'¹² (referring to 20:11 - "There is no fear of God at all in this place) for it is Abimelech who exhibits fear of God (20:4-7, 9-10) and ironically Abraham who does not (20:2).

The message from Kuruvilla is clear; he shows that Abraham has learnt little about trusting God in a similar situation to his past failure when he was rescued by God. Kuruvilla's interpretation of both the text of Genesis 22 and the co-text together is impressive and consistent with his analysis of both narrative and linguistics being solid and insightful. Narrative and co-text are again expounded together as the binding of Isaac is shown to be the important climax of the stumbling faith journey.

⁷ Kuruvilla (2014: 253).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Kuruvilla (2014: 254).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Kuruvilla (2008) - ISB.

This climax concerns God providing an offspring – a test that Kuruvilla sees the story demanding - ‘It was almost as if the test was a necessary one.’¹³

The necessity of such a ‘fiery test’ is not dismissed as ‘only’ or ‘patriarchal only’ but is subsequently passed boldly to the congregation as an important message as the ‘theology of the pericope’ is applied directly to them and their own faith walk.

b) The logical conclusive outcome of his presentation of an extreme test for the believer.

Kuruvilla presses home ‘the test’ as applied to congregants throughout his sermon which he finishes in the following way,

Have you reached a V1 commitment in your walk with God? (the point of no-return in your fear of God). Full throttle, complete obedience, total surrender with nothing, absolutely nothing, held back from Him. God wants that of us, and he’ll test us [Kuruvilla makes a twisting motion with both hands as if wringing out a cloth], and he’ll test us [wringing], and test us again [wringing] ‘til we attain V1.¹⁴

While Kuruvilla preaches the reality and application of the test with great adherence to the text, this strength also raises a considerable question. On application of his first point he states,

Expect God’s fire. Not to trouble or to trap, but to stretch and strengthen you - to remind us of the pettiness of ephemeral things and the priority of an eternal God. Of course our tests may not follow the pattern of Abraham’s. Without giving us a choice as God did for Abraham. He might just take away those things we hold dear. A skewed EKG. A suspicious mammogram. A call – an ominous call from the doctor’s office. Your health gone. Bank account empty. Tuition payments due. Stock market rock bottom. Your livelihood, your finances, gone. But no matter what the format of the test, God’s quiz question remains the same – “How important am I to you? Am I enough for you? A necessary test for our own good. And the first step in acing that test – Expect God’s Fire.¹⁵

Kuruvilla holds nothing back in applying the test to the individual believer. However, the question raised for the listener concerns the nature and character of God, which we have noted has often been a very real question concerning the *Akedah*. With such a direct application one may well reasonably conclude that Christians are put through horrific things by God because, like Abraham, they are not learning, and when they have learnt such testing will cease. It might be suggested

¹³ Kuruvilla (2014: 254).

¹⁴ Kuruvilla (2008) - ISB. Kuruvilla explains that ‘V1’ is the point at which an aeroplane is one hundred percent committed to take-off - the speed at which an aborted take-off is impossible.

¹⁵ Kuruvilla (2008) - ISB. EKG (or ECG) i.e. *electrocardiogram*.

therefore, that it is most important to preach Genesis 22 as concerning a test of faith/fear of God that God himself asks his children to pass only in the realm of: a) no certain reason being given for the test, and b) for the good/blessing of the individual despite a lack of human logic as to how such a test might result in good.

It is not that Kuruvilla doesn't recognise in his work the contradictory nature of God's former promises and 'the test'; he does, yet his primary drive regarding 'the test' is to apply it to individuals in a way that explains a narrative that for many has always retained some mystery in purpose for Abraham.¹⁶ Kuruvilla has argued well that the concept of faith is prevalent throughout the Abrahamic narrative with Genesis 22 being the climax of this theme. It might be suggested that therefore 'faith' should remain central within interpretation as the text shows the need for Abraham's/reader's belief in things he/they cannot see (i.e. through lineage from a dead son). Kuruvilla is perhaps too keen to fully explain 'the test's' purpose in his quest for strong application concerning sanctification. His second point, 'Experience God's Faithfulness' is aimed to help the believer see that they, like Abraham, should be able to trust God in testing times through their knowledge of God's past faithfulness in their life. This, like his first point, continues to explain God's sanctifying purpose in their trial and in so doing it seeks to help the believer to rationalise their test rather than to believe in the God of impossibility as revealed in the Abrahamic narrative. Therefore, it might be suggested that true faith, in extreme testing, operates beyond cognitive rationality, and in this the believer in the pew need not necessarily feel they have to unravel why they are tested, they must simply trust and obey God in trials.

Using Kuruvilla's approach of 'an understood test' people could assume that Christian suffering always equals God's testing. However, an approach taking into account the following points may be helpful: a) the world is fallen and therefore sin, at times, causes suffering, b) there is a real spiritual battle going on that affects people, and one may at times conclude that 'even though [someone] meant to do harm to me [human or Satan], God intended it for good' (using the theme of Genesis 50:20).¹⁷ Such an approach may well mean that God's character is not presented in a way that

¹⁶ Kuruvilla (2014: 251). Kuruvilla recognises the contradiction factor of promise and blessing in offspring through a dead son.

¹⁷ It might be suggested that St. Paul places "If God is for us, who is against us?" in Rom. 8:31 before his likely allusion to Gen. 22 in 8:32, i.e. having faith in God means that nothing (not even death (8:34, 35) will be able to separate the believer from the love of Christ (8: 31-39). Thus the impossibility/contradiction of the command may well be implied in Rom. 8. There may well also be further allusion to Gen. 22, e.g. 8:29 "firstborn within a large family", and the role of Israel/Isaac in 8:36 as suffering "as sheep to be slaughtered". For more on this possible theme in Rom. 8 see Pryor, Dwight A. (no date given), *Akedah: The Testing of Abraham and the Binding of Isaac*, Ohio, Centre for Judeo-Christian Studies, (ACD).

heightens this above the text as individuals face their own trials (He also would not be directly blamed for everything wrong in the world). This would certainly agree with the narrative which shows testing can only be ‘aced’ in the realm of faith rather than human understanding and reason (as in Hebrews 11: 1, 17-19).

2) The fear of God is to be demonstrated by God’s children, involving self-sacrificial trust in God’s promises and wholehearted obedience to his word.

When critiquing Greidanus’ interpretation (using Moberly’s work), it has been noted that the outcome of ‘the test’ is the ‘fear of God.’ For Kuruvilla this is a significant point and it forms the third and final point of his sermon – ‘Exhibit God’s Fear’. This is presented as the goal of ‘the test’ in both his sermon and exposition and is presented alongside Abraham’s co-textual failures – in particular pointing to Abraham’s past words to Abimelech - “There is no fear of God... in this place”(Genesis 20:11). Kuruvilla actually uses Moberly’s work to argue both the goal of the test and the accompanying linguistic word play of ‘test’, ‘fear’ and ‘see/provide’¹⁸, he states,

Notice the key phrase in the acclamation of the angel of Yahweh in Gen 22:12: “Now I know that you *fear God*.” Abraham’s fear of God had, through this test, been proven. This “fearing of God” is a critical element in the account. The last time fear of God was mentioned in the Abrahamic saga was in 20:11 (in fact these are the first two occurrences of “fear of God” in Bible). When Abimelech confronted Abraham with his wife/sister deception, Abraham’s excuse was: “Surely there is no fear [...*yir’at*] of God in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife” (20:11). The reader immediately catches the irony. Abimelech was terror-stricken at the possibility of having run up against God; the text explicitly tells us so: “And the men were greatly frightened [...*wayyir’u... m’od*]” (20:8). On the other hand, it was Abraham who did not fear God enough to trust him to take care of him when God had promised him descendants. Surely his life would not be in danger before he produced progeny. But in Gen 22 Abraham appeared to have learnt his lesson in trusting God.¹⁹

For Kuruvilla ‘faith’ is certainly linked to the ‘fear of God’ and he sees this affirmed in the text of 22:5 – “we will come back” as well as in a general theme throughout the Abrahamic narrative.²⁰ Others have read 22:5 as affirming resurrection as shown in Hebrews 11:17-19,²¹ and although of course Kuruvilla does not make this NT inspired move, he does make the move of Luther (and Vischer) as Abraham’s faith is shown to be demonstrative in the co-text as follows,

¹⁸ See Kuruvilla (2014: 256-57), and Moberly (2000: 97, 96 and 196).

¹⁹ Kuruvilla (2014: 255-56).

²⁰ Kuruvilla (2013: 227).

²¹ For example Chuck Missler’s sermon ‘Resurrection of Isaac’ (ISB).

Surely a God who could give him an heir from a dead womb could bring that one back from a charred altar.²²

Having seen the relationship in the narrative between ‘fear of God’ and ‘faith’ we can now turn our attention to how this is related to ‘the love of God.’²³

3) The love of God’s people for God brooks no rival claim for their love, whatever its object [love/attachment: part a].

Both this point in Kuruvilla’s exegesis, and the following point (4), come under the heading of ‘love/attachment.’ We will look at them in turn noting their dependence on each other. In effect they make up one sizable point concerning the nature of the test.

Kuruvilla links the ‘love of God’ with the ‘fear of God’ and precedent can be found for this biblically, in scholarship and in preaching. Kuruvilla states,

The equation of “fear of God” and “love of God” is not illegitimate: Deut 6:2, 13 command[s]²⁴ fear, while the *Shema* calls for love (6:5); Deut 10:12 and 13:3-4 – each has both elements; also see Deut 10:20 with 11:1; as well as Pss 31:19, 23; and 145:19-20. There is considerable overlap between these two concepts as is evident in the *Aqedah* itself.²⁵

Phyllis Tribble similarly states (noting the link to ‘worship’ in 22:5),

To fear God is to worship God. The term “fearer of God” embodies awe, terror, and devotion... And the worship of God abolishes all idolatries, specifically now the idolatry of the son.²⁶

Peter Steffens’ sermon, ‘When God asks you for everything’ has a similar theme to Kuruvilla’s and he also equates a test of the fear of God with a test of the love of God. Steffens interprets Genesis 22:11-12, saying,

²² Kuruvilla (2014: 256), also Kuruvilla (2008) ISB. For Vischer’s citation of Luther see Vischer (1949: 142), also see Moberly (2000: 134-42).

²³ We have noted here that Kuruvilla sees ‘terrified’ as a part of ‘fear of God’ by linking Abimelech’s disposition after God visited him (Gen. 20:3) with Abraham’s statement concerning ‘fear of God’ (20:11). This steps away from Moberly’s understanding of ‘Fear of God’ as primarily concerning ‘right response to God’ though not completely. Moberly states, ‘Whatever ‘fear of God’ might have meant whenever Genesis 22 was composed, its meaning is not limited to that. ‘Fear of God’, like religion’, is a comprehensive and open ended term, whose meaning can be extended and deepened according to context. The placement of Genesis 22 within the collection of Israel’s scriptures sets it in a literary context in which intertextual resonances abound.’ See Moberly (2000: 79-80, 96-97).

²⁴ Typographical omission adjusted, brackets added.

²⁵ Kuruvilla (2013: 234, ft. 55).

²⁶ Tribble (1991: 178).

God says “No!” – “Now I know that you love me... you did not withhold your precious son.”²⁷

However, Kuruvilla’s understanding of a test of love does not just come from seeing a narrative thematic, or indeed seeing ‘fear’ in 22:12 as conveying a sense of worship/love; rather it emanates from a developed ‘attachment theory’ that utilises textual omission as much as textual inclusion.

Before considering the text as concerning a test of love it is helpful to see an example where others interpret a textual omission and yet Kuruvilla does not. This will show when he is willing to make this move.

This omission concerns the narrative’s silence regarding the emotions of Abraham and Isaac through the near silence of their conversation on the journey to *Moriah*. Michael E. Williams notes that following the command, ‘It is customary at this point in the story to inject natural human reactions to this bizarre request.’²⁸ For example, Luther conjectures greatly in this way.²⁹ However, Kuruvilla position is as follows,

...despite all these heroic efforts, the text remains inscrutable. There is hardly any concern for the details of the event that Luther and others are grasping for. Rather... authorial interest is theological; the writer has an agenda and therefore is selective about what is detailed in the text. It is those details that the interpreter must attend to – it is the text that must be privileged, not the events *behind* the text.³⁰

We have already seen in chapter three that this silence is often interpreted as being a void that can be filled with Abraham’s personal tension/trauma, and/or indeed as showing Abraham’s unbending commitment to God’s command, with Kuruvilla using this second approach. However, while he interprets the silence he does not add conjecturing voices/conversation to the text, as Luther effectively does. In his sermon he holds to this even at the point of ‘the binding’ when he says ‘I wonder what Isaac saw in Abraham’s eyes?’³¹ and he carefully leaves this question inconclusively hanging. We can see from this example that Kuruvilla is open to interpretation of textual ‘omissions’, yet without addition. However, from this it might be suggested that Kuruvilla’s statement of the ‘inscrutability of the text’, concerning emotions and silence in speech, is perhaps a little strong. For in practice he interprets the text’s silence regarding Abraham’s emotions (as Abraham’s undeterred commitment in the test) and he also finds room to ponder/wonder in the silence of the binding concerning what might have been communicated between father and son (yet without conjecture).

²⁷ Steffens (ISB).

²⁸ Williams, Michael E. 1991, *The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, p.116.

²⁹ See Kuruvilla (2013: 216), citing Luther (1964: 112-13).

³⁰ Kuruvilla (2013: 216).

³¹ Kuruvilla (2008) - ISB.

We will see that Kuruvilla only directly embraces silence/omission when he sees the omission as an intended silence, created by the clear omission of words to form a contrast in the narrative when they have previously been included. He sees this, in effect, as interpreting what the text is doing, whereas conjecture of emotions and conversations he largely sees as being beyond the bounds of the text.

Kuruvilla's style of interpreting 'omission' follows that of rabbinic interpretation as a general concept. However, in doing this he utilises an interpretational move that is not frequently used in Christian interpretation. The main focus of Kuruvilla's use of contrasting textual omission comes in his development of 'attachment theory' and the test of love. Kuruvilla's own development of this theory is more extensive and persuasive than many scholars who have argued similarly.³² However, it will be shown that, while Kuruvilla remains with the text, his reading of 'attachment' in Genesis 22 is unpersuasive if one remains with the central concerns of the narrative.

Kuruvilla's argument for 'attachment theory' is proposed through his interpretation of two main specific textual silences: a) 'Your son, your only son (the one you love)' - exegesis point three, and, b) the omission of Isaac in Genesis 22:19 – exegesis point four. We will look at these in turn.

a) 'Your son, your only son (the one you love)'

In Genesis 22:2, when speaking to Abraham, God refers to Isaac as "your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love" prior to the test, while in contrast, after the test, twice (22:12, 16) Isaac is referred to just as "your son, your only son."³³ Kuruvilla interprets this as follows,

The narrative omissions in 22:12 and 16 help to clarify the reason for the test. The trifold description of Isaac in Gen 22:2 was to emphasise that this son, this particular one, was the one Abraham loved, with a love that potentially stood in the way of his allegiance to faith in, God. The subsequent, post-test deletion of the phrase, "the one you love," was clear indication that Abraham had passed the examination... The *Akedah*

³² Other proponents of a similar attachment theory include: Phyllis Tribble, Peter Steffens, Tim Keller, A.W. Tozer and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Soren Kierkegaard also shows some elements of attachment theory (while not giving a fully developed/clear view). Attachment theory has become heightened during the late modern and postmodern periods. See Tribble (1991), Steffens (ISB), Keller (2009: 4-21), Tozer, A.W. 1976, 'The Blessedness of Possessing Nothing', *The Pursuit of God*, Boston/London, Horizon House, pp. 21-31 and, Bonhoeffer, Dietrich 2001, *'Discipleship and the Individual', The Cost of Discipleship*, London, SCM Press, pp. 48-55. For Kierkegaard on attachment-idolatry see Kierkegaard, Soren 1985, *Fear and Trembling*, London, Penguin Classics, p. 65 and, Mooney, Edward F. 1991, *Knights of Faith and Resignation: Reading Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling*, New York, State University of New York Press, p. 30, 92-93.

³³ Kuruvilla (2013: 229).

was, in reality, a demonstration of love for God over and against anything that advanced a rival claim to that love.³⁴

It is therefore highly significant that the first time the word “love” (*’hb*) occurs in the Bible is in Genesis 22:2. With the entry of this word into scripture came an implicit question: Was Abraham’s love for Isaac so strong that his allegiance to God had diminished? It appears, then, that this love of Abraham for Isaac was a crucial element in the test – it was this love that was being tested. Would Abraham be loyal to God, or would love for the human overpower trust in the divine?³⁵

Kuruvilla draws on Phyllis Trible’s work on ‘attachment theory.’³⁶ With reference to ‘the trifold description of Isaac’ she states that ‘language accumulates attachments’.³⁷ This has significant parallels with Kuruvilla’s theory, which similarly moves beyond simply seeing the test as choice to trust God (or not), or even a choice between trusting God and wanting his son to live.

Kuruvilla goes further than this and states that Abraham had a ‘love that potentially stood in the way of his faith’ and that Isaac was ‘a rival claim to that love’³⁸, and he subsequently quotes Trible’ to make a greater claim concerning ‘the test’ - “The story has to do with idolatry – the idolatry of a son.”³⁹ Kuruvilla applies his third point (Exhibit God’s Fear) in his sermon in terms of idolatry. He states, ‘Nothing ought to come between us and God, anything or anyone that does is an idol.’⁴⁰

Although Kuruvilla’s ‘attachment theory’ has similarities to Trible’s, his use of ‘the only son’ is more adherent to explicit textual usage because he expounds the omission of ‘whom you love’ in 22:12, 16 (in comparison to 22:2). At no point does Trible use this omission to support her interpretation as she reads Genesis 22:2, 12 and 16 as a straight repetition. In effect she sees the words ‘your only son’ in 22:12, 16 as to include ‘whom you love.’⁴¹ Kuruvilla comes to the same ‘attachment conclusion’ as Trible, and does indeed use her work. However, he has simplified this move by expounding the omission of ‘whom you love’ in 22:12, 16. For Kuruvilla, ‘attachment theory’ is shown within the words of the divine command which recognises Abraham’s love for Isaac prior to

³⁴ Kuruvilla (2013:229).

³⁵ Kuruvilla (2013:229).

³⁶ Trible (1991).

³⁷ Trible (1991: 172).

³⁸ Kuruvilla (2013: 229-230).

³⁹ Trible in Kuruvilla (2013: 229), from Moyers, Bill (ed). 1996, *Genesis: A Living Conversation*, New York, Doubleday. p. 227.

⁴⁰ Kuruvilla (2008) – ISB.

⁴¹ Trible (1991: 178-9). Trible’s attachment theory (attachment, detachment and reattachment) centres on the words ‘son,’ ‘Isaac’ and ‘boy’. Her reading suggests that at first the text shows Abraham’s attachment but subsequently shows him as increasingly detached from Isaac. For example, concerning 22: 5 Trible states, “‘I and the young man,’ he says, not ‘I and my son’ or ‘I and Isaac.’ Otherness undercuts oneness; detachment vies with attachment. Establishing distance, *na’ar* avoids the pain of paternal bonding. “Your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac in the language of God has become in the speech of Abraham “the young man,” like the other “young men [22:5, 19].” Trible (1991: 174).

the divine intervention but does not include this 'love' after it, thus showing detachment - Abraham from Isaac. Kuruvilla states,

[T]here is a significant alteration, before and after the test, in how God/angel of Yahweh described Isaac. The narrative omissions in 22:12 and 16 help clarify the reason for the test. The trifold description of Isaac in Gen 22:2 was to emphasize that this son, this particular one, was the one Abraham loved,⁴² with a love that potentially stood in the way of his allegiance to, and faith in, God. The subsequent, post-test deletion of the phrase, "the one you love," was clear indication that Abraham had passed the examination.⁴³

In this Kuruvilla interprets a textual 'omission' which many ignore. We will return to look at how this 'contrasting silence' (text compared with omission of the same) might alternatively be interpreted, for we will see his interpretation does come with problems. However, first we shall look at Kuruvilla's second point in his development of 'attachment theory' as both points are intertwined in his 'attachment theory.'

4) The love of God/fear of God trumps every other allegiance

[love/attachment: part b].

b) The omission of Isaac

Kuruvilla, again like Tribble, links the writing out of Isaac from the narrative in 22:19 to his developed 'attachment theory' showing once more that he is at ease in expounding this 'omission' created within the text. This can be claimed as an omission in 22:19 which could have read - "Abraham and Isaac." As Abraham returned down the mountain to his servants Isaac is omitted from the test and Kuruvilla notes that 'the narrator apparently took an eraser and wiped out any mention of Isaac after the "sacrifice."' ⁴⁴ He states,

There was a purpose behind this: the author was *doing* something with what he was saying (in this case with what he failed to say), creating a striking gap in the narrative, but that too, is to "say" something.⁴⁵

The omission of Isaac here is certainly striking and this gives Kuruvilla confidence in claiming a sense of authorial intent. While authorial intent is a problematic claim, and especially regarding such an omission, Isaac's absence in 22:19 does stand out to the point that interpretation seems necessary

⁴² Here Kuruvilla briefly adds the idea of Abraham's love of Isaac over Ishmael, as well as over God, into his argument. However, he does not develop this statement (for a developed interpretation of this see Wiesel (1976: 65-66)).

⁴³ Kuruvilla (2013: 229).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Kuruvilla (2013: 233)

and Jewish and Christian interpreters have historically grappled with this point.⁴⁶ However, again Kuruvilla is in a minority group of preachers who have sought to interpret this.⁴⁷

Kuruvilla's approach to this again mirrors Tribble's interpretation, which is to say that the omission of Isaac in 22:19 reveals and supports the idea that Abraham's attachment to his son is now broken.⁴⁸ Yet Kuruvilla again goes beyond Tribble in his use of the text, and he uses the phrase, "so the two of them walked on together" (22:6, 8) which he sees as an omission in 22:19 after the divine intervention where it simply reads "they arose and went together" ('they' being 'the young men' rather than 'the two' – Isaac and Abraham). This reinforces Isaac's omission in 22:19 when Abraham appears to descend the mountain alone, and again confirms a successfully broken attachment.⁴⁹

Subsequent to this Kuruvilla makes a final observation that reinforces Abraham's newly 'clarified relational status'⁵⁰ concerning his son as he notices that Isaac is not recorded in the remainder of the Abrahamic narrative as speaking with his father again.⁵¹ He states,

The test had shown that Abraham loved God more than anyone else. And to bring that home to readers, father and son are separated for the rest of their days – *literally* separated, that is, for the purpose of achieving that narrator's theological agenda. He was *doing* something with what he is *saying*.⁵²

⁴⁶ For example see Tribble, Kuruvilla, Steffens for Christian interpretations on this point. Also, see Wiesel (1976: 84-86) and Spiegel (2007: 3-5, 7-8, 47) for discussion of rabbinic tradition.

⁴⁷ For example, Moberly, who in recent years has added significant contributions to the interpretation of Genesis 22 does not expound 22:19 and Isaac's omission in any of his works cited in the bibliography. Steffens is unusual in that he preaches a similar attachment theory to Kuruvilla (i.e. 'test of love' and omission of Isaac in 22:19). See Steffens - (ISB).

⁴⁸ Regarding Gen 22:19 Tribble states, 'Alone Abraham returns from the place of sacrifice. It can be no other way. If the story is to fulfil its meaning, Isaac cannot, must not, and does not appear. Abraham, man of faith, has learned the lesson of nonattachment. Before the crises he asserted that "we will return" (*šûb*, 22:5). But now the narrator perceptively returns to the verb in the singular: "So Abraham returned..." (*šûb*, 22:19).' See Tribble (1991: 181).

⁴⁹ This could be developed, as Kuruvilla simply notices that the phrase 'went on together' is modified in 22:19. However, there is also a direct mirroring/inverse of the way the 'your son, your only son (whom you love)' works. Both phrases come three times, with one time altered. In the first case (prior to divine intervention) 'whom you love' is later omitted in the second and third instances. While in the second phrase, "together" refers twice to Abraham and Isaac, the first two times (prior to divine intervention) and once to Abraham and 'the young men.' This inverse 'butterfly' pattern in the text may suggest that these phrases are linked in meaning (as Kuruvilla is using them in effect). More could be said in interpretation perhaps. However, such structural intricacies may well lack credibility due to the possibility of being seen as too intricate, and thus they may be seen as being a forced reader response interpretation, rather than a more plausible natural reader response.

⁵⁰ Kuruvilla (2013: 233). Also stating, 'The author was depicting a line drawn; the relationship between father and son had been clarified.'

⁵¹ Kuruvilla states, 'As to whether they were *actually* separated, that is an issue behind the text that need not concern the interpreter.' See Kuruvilla (2013: 234, ft. 56).

⁵² Kuruvilla (2013: 234).

Concerns regarding Kuruvilla's 'attachment theory'

We have seen that Kuruvilla engages with the text through his developed 'attachment theory', and we have noted that other scholars hold to similar readings. However, 'attachment theories' may well be found to be unconvincing due to the following three points of discussion: i) The prime concerns of the text: goal and outcome, ii) The nature of the '*olah*', iii) The ambiguity of textual 'omissions'. We shall look briefly at each in turn.

i) The prime concerns of the text: goal and outcome

In both his 'theological focus', and five points that make up his sermon exposition, Kuruvilla shows that he sees 'love' as important as 'fear' as a textual theme. While, he argues for 'love' and 'fear' as linked he does so canonically and from textual omission/contrast, rather than from an explicit textual claim. His interpretation of 'fear' in Genesis 22 (and 20) has suggested 'fear' as both 'right response to God and terrified of God'. 'Fear of God' does incorporate other elements (e.g. trust, obedience and love). However, these are not explicitly set forward in the reader's primary thinking with regards to the goal of the test in 22:12, while fear is.

We have seen that Tribble suggests that the 'test of love' results in a corrected paternal relationship. Kuruvilla also makes this move, though in a more subtle way,

No more would the account portray father and son speaking to each other or even being in one another's presence until the older one dies (25:8-9)... The author was depicting a line drawn; the relationship between father and son had been clarified, the tension between fear of God and love of son has been resolved.⁵³

However, it might be argued that just as the text explicitly claims the test to concern 'fear of God' (22:12), so too it explicitly claims the outcome as a blessing (now in heightened form) and many offspring (22: 17, 18). In so doing it makes no explicit claim for a corrected or 'clarified' paternal relationship as an outcome. Further to this, such a suggestion raises significant problems in itself as it is hard to see how the binding and near sacrifice of a son could adjust a paternal relationship positively.⁵⁴ Indeed, ironically Kuruvilla's interpretation could well be read as suggesting that his

⁵³ Kuruvilla (2013: 233).

⁵⁴ Søren Kierkegaard explores the idea that humanly the test would not, under normal circumstances, have improved a relationship but would actually destroy it and so for Johannes de Silentio the theme of faith in *Fear and Trembling* includes both the faith to receive Isaac back and equally the faith in God, that the relationship will be restored and made greater/new through 'the absurd,' when logically and relationally this is most unlikely. Silentio states, 'The greatest falsehood... my immense resignation would be a substitute for faith... Neither would I have loved Isaac as Abraham did. In fact that I made the movement resolutely might

relationship with Isaac is now completely over, rather than clarified, as he has no more contact or conversation with his father.

ii) The nature of the *'olah*

It has been suggested that the canonical imagery of the *'olah* brings with it concerns regarding the viability of such an attachment theory. Moberly outlines below the problematic nature of claiming Abraham as idolatrous towards Isaac in relationship to the *'olah*, as well as the 'unloaded' nature of the word 'love.'

Why should the accumulation of terms of endearment towards Isaac be seen as unhealthy and idolatrous? The fact that not all phrases used are necessary to say that Abraham loves Isaac does open the way to a range of interpretations of their significance (as the tradition of Jewish exegesis well illustrates). But at least two considerations tell against Tribble's supposition of a negative significance. First, there is no ambivalence in the terms used of Isaac: an 'only son' (*yahid*) is the regular Hebrew term for the prime object of a parent's love and hope; and the verb for love (*'ahav*) has none of the ambiguity of other verbs that could have been used, such as 'desire' (*hamad*). Secondly, there is the consistent Hebrew understanding that sacrifice in the form of a whole burnt offering (*'olah*) should involve that which is intrinsically good ('without blemish', *tamim*, Lev. 1:3). If Abraham is to relinquish idolatrous attachment to Isaac, such relinquishment would be of value, but it would not be a sacrifice as the Old Testament understands sacrifice.⁵⁵

The above statement is made in critique of Tribble's interpretation (as used by Kuruvilla).

Moberly's suggestion of an *'olah* as being 'without blemish' is significant because Kuruvilla's 'attachment theory' does suggest that Abraham is effectively being told – "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love [a little too much]", i.e. this 'love' from Abraham to Isaac is marred and 'blemished', and Abraham is offering Isaac – the object of blemished love. Tozer defines this as God effectively is saying to Abraham – 'I want to correct the perversion that existed in your love.'⁵⁶ However, Moberly has stated that 'love (*'ahav*) has none of the ambiguity of other verbs that could have been used.' That said, *'ahav* has not always canonically been used to depict a righteous or perfect love. For example, in 2 Samuel 13:1 it is used to describe Amnon's apparent falling 'in love'

demonstrate my courage humanly speaking, that I loved him with all my soul is a precondition without which the whole affair becomes an act of wickedness, and yet I would not have loved as Abraham loved; for then I would have held back at the very last minute, though without this meaning that I'd arrive late at the mountain in Moriah. Furthermore my behaviour would have vitiated the whole story, for I would have been at a loss had I got Isaac back again. What Abraham found the easiest of all would for me be hard, to find joy again in Isaac! For he who with all the infinity of his soul, *proprio motu et propriis auspiciis* [on his own accord and on his own responsibility], has made the infinite movement and can do so no more, that person only keeps Isaac with pain.' See Kierkegaard (1985: 65).

⁵⁵ Moberly (2000: 167).

⁵⁶ Tozer (1976: 26).

with his sister Tamar who he raped (v. 14). Clearly, Amnon did not truly love Tamar and his act is described as 'vile' by Tamar (13:12). In this case 'ahav is used to set up the narrative before the narrator increasingly introduces a troubling nature in the narrative which leads from incest, to incest with rape. The narrative thematically shows Amnon's feelings/actions as perverse. In contrast, the Genesis 22 narrative never thematically presents 'ahav in this kind of way, and thus Abraham's love of Isaac is presented as wholesome and good. Therefore, 'whom you love' in 22:2 most likely concerns the divine recognition of the enormity of what is being asked of Abraham.⁵⁷

From this we see that neither a critical analysis of 'love', nor a wider canonical understanding of the 'olah, support Kuruvilla's suggestion regarding the *Akedah* being intended to correct an idolatrous paternal relationship which results in the gift of broken attachment through the divine test. Moberly's argument takes the idea of Isaac presented as an 'olah seriously, as well as the narrative's use of love. Ultimately Levitical sacrifice is never portrayed within the Old Testament as an act of idolatry with the animal to be sacrificed as its subject of worship. Rather it always concerns only the worship of YHWH via the perfect sacrifice, from the sacrificer's perspective.⁵⁸

iii) The ambiguity of textual 'omissions'

Kuruvilla's 'attachment theory' has been shown to engage with the text at all times. However, ultimately what is being claimed comes from an argument of three textual silences rather than inclusions (the omission of "whom you love", the omission of Isaac in 22:19, and the omission of any interaction between Abraham and Isaac for the rest of the Abrahamic narrative). Therefore, Kuruvilla's theory can remain only a theory and it might be suggested that an interpretation concerning attachment/idolatry should not feature as significantly, if at all, as 'a test of the fear of God', which is explicit within the text. One must presume that Kuruvilla is convinced that this theory is a concern of the text for he remains so close to the text at all times. Such a conviction is evident because we have seen that, with regards to other textual omissions, he would normally claim such an argument as being 'inscrutably behind the text.'

To interpret in such a way is problematic not only because of the preceding two points, but also because alternative ways of interpreting these 'omissions' are possible (and are equally not provable). Examples include: a) as suggested, 'whom you love' (22:2) could be included to reveal a

⁵⁷ In commentary on 22:2 A.S. Herbert states, 'The pathos is finely expressed in a series of accusatives '... THY SON, THINE ONLY SON WHOMN THOU LOVEST, ISAAC.' While Claus Westermann states that God's words 'underscore the difficulty and harshness.' See Herbert, A.S. 1962, *Genesis 12-50: Introduction and Commentary*, London, SCM Press, p. 54, and Westermann, Claus 1985, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary* (ET Scullion), London, SPCK, p.357.

⁵⁸ Lev. 1:2, 14; 2:1, 8, 11, 14; 3:1, 3, 6, 11, 12, 16; 4:4 etc.

divine recognition of the enormity of 'the test', b) the 'omission' of Isaac from the text in 22:19 may simply be a literary feature that is intended to bring the interpreter back to this event as primarily concerning Abraham and God (Isaac's 'omission' is far greater than just 22:19 as he is not featured as certainly physically present, or mentioned by name, from 22:12 onwards – nearly half the narrative and journey to, and from, *Moriah*), c) with reference to atonement language in the *Akedah* ('*olah*' in 22:2 and ram as perhaps a guilt offering in 22:13 – canonically linking to Leviticus 1, 5, 6), one could move to claim Isaac's removal from the text/mountain, as indicative of a sense of *Aza'zel* /scapegoat as Isaac represents the expiatory sacrifice that lives and is sent away.⁵⁹

From the above, we can see that omissions are ambiguous with multiple possible theories, none of which can be claimed as certain in terms of the concerns of the text/author (as Kuruvilla does), or as a clear reader response (i.e. not everyone sees attachment in the text).

A test of love that trumps every other allegiance?

While we have seen that claiming the test as concerning a developed understanding of idolatry and attachment/detachment is problematic, there may be some grounds, textually and canonically, to claim the test as concerning love. We have seen that Kuruvilla claims that John 3:16 has 'almost' a connection with Genesis 22 (in reality his congregation will certainly have registered this suggestion). As he makes this link he does so with reference to 'the test' concerning love, as after the sacrifice he states that - 'One might almost say: *For Abraham so loved God that he gave his only begotten son...*'⁶⁰ If one links John 3:16 to Genesis 22 (either by claiming conscious authorial intent or a reader response interpretation), one must conclude that canonically Abraham's 'love' of God is an integral part of his 'fear of God'.

In terms of Kuruvilla's claim that this test of love trumps every other allegiance, such a point remains apt. Not through developed attachment theory, rather because the test concerns something/one who is very dear to Abraham indeed – a family member 'whom he loves.' There is of course a sense of choosing his son 'who he loves' or God who he must therefore love more. However, again no more needs to be said as Abraham's idolatrous attachment to Isaac has been shown as unlikely.

⁵⁹ There seems to be no rabbinic or Christian precedent for such a reading. This reading of course has problems in terms of how exactly the two goats of Leviticus 16 would fit the narrative because the 'Lord's goat (sin offering), which is killed, does not feature – in Gen. 22, this is a ram (which does feature in Lev. 16:3). Ultimately therefore, such a line of thought is somewhat confusing and this suggestion is questionable regarding development. Yet such an interpretation does have some 'resonance' to it, and it should be noted that exactly what is going on in Gen. 22 with reference to Levitical sacrifices is not totally clear, especially in terms of sin (as discussed). The claim therefore would just be that Gen. 22 links *Moriah*/temple to the keeping of Torah (Moberly), which sacrifice is a significant part of, and which may well use the image of the *Aza'zel* and expiation as well as guilt (ram) and the '*olah*'.

⁶⁰ Kuruvilla (2014: 261).

5) Demonstration of faith in God's promises and his word results in divine blessing/reward.

Kuruvilla's exegesis of point five cannot be critiqued in terms of praxis as his recorded sermon does not use this point at all. It may be that on the occasion he simply did not have time to move to this point, or possibly, as his method and commentary were written after the time of his 2008 sermon he decided on further reflection that it was an important addition.⁶¹

While Greidanus might be said to rush towards 'provide/blessing' as the outcome of the test, Kuruvilla's preached sermon remains centrally on 'fear and love of God' and never arrives at 'blessing.' However, his exegesis does; therefore here we will simply state his point with comment.

It should be noted that this final point perhaps makes a very sizable contribution to Kuruvilla's methodology in terms of divine demand. Thus it is extremely significant here in terms of its possible influence over his entire preaching hermeneutic.

Concerning this point, once again Kuruvilla holds very tightly to the text and its concerns, and he again also interprets Genesis 22 to the end. His position is as follows. He states,

The consequences of Abraham's action in the narrative of Gen 22, also give credence to the interpretation of the story as teaching what it means to fear God.⁶²

Again noting his interaction with the wider Abrahamic narrative,

... Abraham successfully passes the test... the narrative is both the zenith of the Abraham Story and the climax of Abraham's worship. Of the three altars in the patriarch's story (12:8; 13:18; and 22:9), the one in Gen 22 is the only one with a sacrifice; with the others, Abraham only calls on the name of Yahweh (12:8; 13:4).⁶³

From this point Kuruvilla makes the following statement, which while it may well depart from the perspective of many scholars, he shows how it holds to the text,

Scholars have generally held that the Abrahamic promises (in Gen 12, 15, 17, 18, 22) are unconditional. Yet, upon examination of the promise made to the patriarch at the conclusion of the momentous events of Gen 22, one cannot but notice contingency: the clauses "because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son" and "because you have obeyed my voice"... bookend the promised blessing (Gen 22:16c-18).⁶⁴

⁶¹ One cannot interpret this silence for sure, though theories abound!

⁶² Kuruvilla (2014: 261).

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

This is the basic thrust of Kuruvilla's final exegetical movement/point. He goes on to state the heightening of the already stated divine promises, saying, 'Every element of the original promise is fortified here, ratcheted up a notch.'⁶⁵ The heightened promises, in short, are as follows,

Gen 22:17a has "greatly bless" (...unique in Genesis); likewise "greatly multiply" (... also found in 16:10m but 22:17b is the only instance of this promise to the Abraham-Isaac-Jacob lineage). Moreover, 22:17c employs two similes – stars of the heavens, and sand of the seashore... used elsewhere in Genesis singly, but never together... and the possession by Abraham's seed of "the gate of their enemies" (...Gen 22:17d) is unusual for the promises in Genesis.⁶⁶ The nations being blessed "in your descendants" (... 22:18a and 26:4; 28:14) is also new - thus far the blessing of the nations had been explicitly "in Abraham" (12:3; 18:18)... It is an enhancement of the earlier promise, especially solidified in Yahweh's unique swearing by himself (... 22:16).⁶⁷

From this Kuruvilla moves to conclude that Abraham's testing which results in such a heightening of the promises has implications concerning his actions of obedience to God,

Thus human obedience has greater value than merely being incorporated into divine plan, and the resulting blessing is more than just a confirmation of what God has already promised... Obedience does result in reward/blessing, an act of divine grace.⁶⁸

Here Kuruvilla is most likely concluding by way of critiquing Moberly's suggestion of 'incorporation'⁶⁹, and Calvin's suggestion of 'confirmation.'⁷⁰ However, while Kuruvilla has demonstrated from the text why Calvin here falls short of the mark, it is not immediately clear as to just how he differs from Moberly. The difference is subtle and it primarily comes down to strength of statement, and implications beyond statements. In Moberly's later work (which Kuruvilla engages with) he states that,

Neither human integrity nor divine gift are trivialised... only here is God's blessing in some way dependant upon Abraham's obedience (...18b)... On the one hand, there is a sense in which the basis for God's blessing has changed... ["Abraham's obedience has been incorporated into the divine promise"]... On the other hand, Abraham has not used God's promise of descendants through Isaac (17:15-19; cf. 18:18) as a reason for not heeding YHWH's voice. His response shows the logic of trust in its most sharp and paradoxical form. The reaffirmation of the divine blessing is therefore an affirmation of the righteousness of Abraham's construal of the promise... God does not just promise to Abraham but swears an oath to him...[Quoting David Blumenthal -] 'all references in the Torah to God having sworn to do something for the forefathers go back to one instance', that is Genesis 22:15-18. Whatever precisely one makes of this, it underlines

⁶⁵ Kuruvilla (2014: 262).

⁶⁶ Kuruvilla footnotes – 'This phrase also occurs in Gen 24:60, with the blessing of Rebekah by her family.' See Kuruvilla (2014: 262, ft. 32).

⁶⁷ Kuruvilla (2014: 262).

⁶⁸ Kuruvilla (2014: 263).

⁶⁹ See Moberly (1988: 321).

⁷⁰ Kuruvilla cites Calvin (no reference given) as saying, '...this same promise has already been given; and now it receives nothing more in confirmation.' See Kuruvilla (2014: 262).

the foundational nature for Israel's life of Abraham's response to God which takes trust to its extremity.⁷¹

Clearly here Moberly is cautious in his language yet conveys the importance of both the divine command/test and human obedience (with its implications for the life of Israel). What he does not do, and this is where Kuruvilla moves beyond Moberly's position, is to make any claim regarding the ability of human obedience being able to bring about God's grace. Kuruvilla is a careful scholar and undoubtedly is completely aware that to state that, 'Obedience does result in... an act of divine grace' is problematic for some. He has demonstrated that the text shows contingency, as does Moberly. However, to frame this within the concept of grace may well be a move beyond/outside the primary concerns of the narrative. With such contingency being shown as unique to this Abrahamic text, its presence within the *Akedah* may simply be literary in feature, with its inclusion coming at the 'zenith' of the whole Abrahamic narrative to primarily show the importance of human obedience within the test.

While Kuruvilla does not include this last point in his 2008 preached sermon, having viewed his exegetical arguments here, we can now see that his reading of divine blessing/promise through testing in Genesis 22 may have been significant for him in forming his presented hermeneutic for preaching (i.e. obedience to divine demand in every pericope of Scripture). Further critique/comment on this will follow in chapter 5.

Christiconic Hermeneutics

As stated at the start of this chapter Kuruvilla's movement to Christ is straightforward (though we have noted how there is much behind it). Here his section from his Genesis commentary will be quoted in full as it is short and self-explanatory. We will further critique this move in chapter five in comparison to Greidanus' Christocentric hermeneutic. We will also note his sermon in terms of the Christiconic movement.

Kuruvilla firstly reminds his readers of his theological focus of Genesis 22,

Fear of God trumps every other allegiance and manifests in self sacrificial obedience (22:1-19).⁷²

After which he summarises his general hermeneutics which have lead to his theological focus and thus presents his move to Christ-likeness,

⁷¹ Moberly (2000: 120) citing Moberly (1988: 321) and Blumenthal, David 1998, 'Confronting the Character of God: Text and Praxis', in Beal, Timothy and Linfelt, Tod (eds.), *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, pp. 38-51, esp. 38-42.

⁷² Kuruvilla (2014: 263).

“What then, does Abraham teach us? To put it briefly, he teaches us not to prefer the gifts of God to God.... Therefore, put not even a real gift of God before the Giver of that gift” (Augustine, *Serm. 2*). Thus the intent of the author was to call for an identification of the readers with the protagonist of this story – Abraham, the paragon of faith. God’s people everywhere are to exercise the kind of faith in God that Abraham had, the kind of love that Abraham demonstrated, the kind of fear of God that Abraham exhibited: nothing is to come between God and the believer – *nothing!* This is the lesson the preacher must proclaim, this is what the reader must do. That is no less a christological understanding of Gen 22 than any other interpretative option: part of what it means to be Christlike is to exercise the kind of faith, demonstrate the kind of love, and exhibit the kind of fear that Abraham did.⁷³

Hermeneutic Overview and use of the New Testament

Kuruvilla starts with an ‘overview’ for preaching Genesis 22. He again reminds us of his general hermeneutic position regarding his initial move in OT interpretation by saying,

Rather than immediately flinging out a lifeline from the NT to accomplish a christocentric rescue of the *aqedah*, I suggest that the interpreter privilege the text and its immediate context to figure out what the A/author was doing with what he was saying (the theology of the pericope).⁷⁴

Kuruvilla’s tone in this ‘overview’ section is defensive, and somewhat dismissive regarding Christocentric typological readings of Genesis 22. While he never utilises typology, in the case of Genesis 22 he feels the need to reiterate his position in the light of so many current and historic interpreters who have used typology when expounding the *Akedah* Christianly.⁷⁵ As he points out,

The concepts of “sacrifice” and “son” and “substitute” in Gen 22 have obvious parallels in the theology of the atonement; the resulting enterprise of finding typological elements in Gen 22 has been unparalleled in the history of biblical interpretation.⁷⁶

Kuruvilla holds two main objections to typological use here, both of which concern a ‘confusion of types’. They are: a) the lack of general consensus regarding types, i.e. Abraham and Isaac as types of God the Father and Son, as well as Isaac and/or the ram as Christocentric types, and b) the lack of exact words, and roots, regarding the typology of the ram.

This second point is said with particular mention of Greidanus’ position which we have seen links ‘lamb’(*seh*) and ‘ram’(*‘ayil*) in Genesis 22: 7, 13 to John 1:29. Kuruvilla states,

According to one modern interpreter, “[c]learly, the theme of God providing a lamb leads directly to Jesus Christ and the sacrifice he makes so that his people may live.” Despite these Christocentric assertions, ancient and modern, Moberly makes it clear

⁷³ Kuruvilla (2014: 263) citing Augustine (no reference given).

⁷⁴ Kuruvilla (2014: 252).

⁷⁵ Particularly noting early Church Fathers (Kuruvilla (2013: 217)).

⁷⁶ Kuruvilla (2013: 217).

that (*seh*), translated “lamb” in Genesis 22:7, is “a generic term for an animal of the flock.” Indeed even the LXX of Gen 22:7 has... *probaton*, and not the christological “lamb” of John 1:29 that one might expect. The precise Hebrew word for lamb is... *kebes*, as in “lamb” of the “continuous” offering, Exod 29:38, and not *seh*. Thus there appears to be little basis for drawing out any ovine typology from Gen 22.⁷⁷

Here we can see that Kuruvilla’s methodology of holding very tightly to the text means that straight word parallels must be evident for canonical usage in interpretation (not that he claims use of the NT in interpreting the OT anyway). We have already seen that there is indeed good argument for a general ‘ovine’ typology if one is, a) prepared to use the NT to some extent to inform interpretation of the OT, and b) if one is willing to accept that writers and readers find reference to Genesis 22 in the shape of textual allusion, conceptual parallels and narrative resonances. Indeed, Kuruvilla in effect sets up the possibility for a general ‘ovine’ typology, though not a specific one, but his decision not to utilise NT allusion/references is unbending and he sticks firmly to his methodology as he moves to commentary for preaching.

Remaining with the theme of Kuruvilla’s ‘overview’ concerning typology, at this point we will briefly view how he uses the NT in his general hermeneutics, which of course has a bearing for his later Christiconic move.

In his most recent work he even makes the unfathomable statement that, ‘In fact, the NT does not specifically refer to the *aqedah* at all.’⁷⁸ It is not that Kuruvilla misses the explicit NT references of Hebrews 11:17-19 and James 2:21, for he does make mention of them. However, he simply renders them irrelevant for the Christian interpretation of the *Akedah*. When using Davies’ and Chilton’s work he footnotes saying,

That Paul makes “little theological capital” of the *aqedah* in his epistles is obvious; Rom 8:32 neither has any explicit mention of Isaac (as in Gal 4:28), nor does it employ the LXX’s ... *agapētou*, “beloved,” Gen 22:2, 12, 16. Hebrews 11:17 also refuses to use this potent adjective, preferring... *monogenēs*, “only” instead (Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 60-61, 21). And, rather than being a definitive statement of the meaning of the *aqedah*, Heb 11:19 simply underscores Abraham’s incredible faith in a trustworthy God, as a result of which, “in a sense/so to speak ... [...*en parabolē*, “symbolically/figuratively”], he received him [Isaac] back from the dead.”⁷⁹

As he notes Moberly’s parallel of OT ‘fear of God’ with ‘NT ‘faith’⁸⁰ Kuruvilla states,

⁷⁷ Kuruvilla (2014: 251-52) quoting Greidanus (1999: 311) and Moberly (2000: 107, ft. 52).

⁷⁸ Kuruvilla (2014: 252).

⁷⁹ Kuruvilla (2014: 252, ft. 6) citing Davies, P.R. and B.D. Chilton 1978, ‘The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History’, *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 40, pp. 514-46, esp. p. 532, and Kessler, Edward 2004, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 60-61, 121.

⁸⁰ Moberly (2000: 79, 96).

It is this faith of the patriarch in God... that is emphasised in Heb 11:17-19. James 2:21 points to the “justification” (or proving) of Abraham by the specific “work” of his offering up Isaac, thus consummating his faith.⁸¹

Kuruville’s point in claiming that ‘the NT does not specifically refer to the *aqedah* at all’, while being wide of the mark (by his own admission/referencing), seems to be much like that of Greidanus, i.e. he sees the exemplifying of Abraham’s faith in the two explicit NT references to the *Akedah* as not concerning its central message (yet his sermon theme does ironically have faith within it). However, even this conclusion is problematic as we have seen that when he earlier cites James 2:21 he upholds Moberly’s assimilation of NT ‘faith’ with OT ‘fear of God.’ What is clear is that he attempts to hold to his methodology of not using NT texts to interpret OT texts, and yet it is evident that with reference to Moberly’s position he is not able to do so entirely. With this slightly confusing stance it is helpful to see how he preaches as he moves from ‘text to praxis,’ as in reality he does default somewhat to using the NT at times. He does this in practice in three ways,

- a) As seen in his methodology and exposition he assimilates ‘faith’ with ‘fear of God’ as the concern of the test. In his sermon, regarding the complete Abrahamic narrative up to Genesis 22 (i.e. “after all these things” 22:1) he states that – ‘Throughout the saga of Abraham he has rather clumsily stumbled along in his faith... the dude is not showing a whole lot of faith’ and his application is that ‘tests are part and parcel of one’s spiritual pilgrimage.’ As just stated, in using Moberly’s work he is using the NT to interpret the OT text by proxy.
- b) Kuruville uses 1 Peter 4:12 to support his first sermon point ‘Expect God’s Fire’) that ‘the test’ is real and relevant for the believer. While Genesis 22 is the general hermeneutic source of this interpretation, the NT is used as a canonical affirmation in a similar sense to Greidanus’ suggestion of supporting NT verses for his Christocentric movement of *Analogy*.
- c) Kuruville also uses key NT verses in a similar way to Greidanus’ move concerning the application of NT references. In his sermon he makes two moves of this type, he states, ‘When the time of our test comes, will we trust God as our provider as Abraham did? “He who did not spare his own son but delivered him up for us all, how will he not with him freely give us all things?’ This is an interesting inclusion in Kuruville’s sermon when he has specifically noted that Romans 8:32 has no explicit mention of Isaac and its terminology is not directly used in the LXX (thus questioning typological use of this verse). Again, later in his sermon, he also states, ‘...this God deserves the sacrifice of everything we hold dear. He did it first for us didn’t he? – giving us a Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. How important was God to

⁸¹ Kuruville (2013: 227-28).

Abraham for Abraham so loved God that he gave his son.’ This second inclusion is even more interesting for not only does it include elements of Romans 8:32 within it, it also includes John 3:16. Not only that, his use of John 3:16 is not just a point of affirmation of a general hermeneutic, interpreted in isolation, with a NT/Christocentric interpretation that follows (like Greidanus), but actually the NT verse leads this moment of interpretation but is now quoted with the words of the OT placed into it (i.e. “For God (Abraham) so loved the world (God), that he gave his... Son (son)”). This is quite extraordinary because not only does it step outside all of his arguments that these two NT texts cannot be claimed as having the *Akedah* in the make up but it also presents his listeners with allusion to a typology of God the Father and Son. This moment in his sermon is poignant as it stands out in much the same way as von Rad’s ‘road out into Godforsakenness’ motif. In his exposition Kuruvilla also includes this, though out of the emotive language setting of the pulpit he does cautiously precede it saying ‘One might almost say: For Abraham so loved God that he gave his only begotten son.’⁸²

Specific Reference to Christ

In his sermon Kuruvilla makes three explicit references to Christ. The first two concern his quoting of John 3:16 and Romans 8:32 (already noted). These are primarily used to encourage the believer that God has been through the testing experience of Golgotha. Kuruvilla asks/states as follows,

If you look back in your life, you will find that God has been providing for you freely beginning with your salvation in Christ... He did it first for us didn’t he?⁸³

However, we have seen that these are not actually used as a part of his central Christiconic method towards Christ-likeness (though in reality they will of course build some linking towards Christ in the mind of his listeners). His actual move towards Christ-likeness comes in a single line at the start of his third point (Exhibit God’s fear) as follows,

... this fear of God is an integral part of what it means to be Christ-like. God’s priority demands that his children hold nothing from him. Nothing!⁸⁴

⁸² Kuruvilla (2014: 261).

⁸³ Kuruvilla (2008) – ISB.

⁸⁴ Kuruvilla (2008) – ISB.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Before turning to conclusions regarding the theory, practice and application of each scholar's hermeneutic, a point-by-point résumé will follow which outlines the concerns of the Genesis 22 text that have been argued for. This résumé could be used to form a reasoned exegesis of the passage:

- 1) Genesis 22 conveys a real test, not a test presented to the reader as 'only' a test, or a 'patriarchal only' test.
- 2) The narrative primarily concerns Abraham and God.
- 3) The text itself reveals that the 'fear of God'/'faith' is the goal of the test (22: 12). The outcome of the test is blessing/promise and covenant.
- 4) The test concerns the love of God over the love of that which is dearest (Isaac). However, this is not heightened enough within the text to claim 'a test of love' over a test of 'the fear of God' (22: 12), and the test/text does not focus on corrected attachment as an outcome, which has been shown as concerning heightened blessings/promise (22: 15-18).
- 5) *Moriah* has been suggested as the temple mount, as is widely understood in Jewish tradition.
- 6) A view has been argued for that takes the NT's interpretation of the Genesis text seriously (both explicitly and via allusion), within the general hermeneutic movement, as the NT informs the reading of the OT text (faith – Hebrews 11: 17-19 and James 2: 21-22) as well as informing the Christocentric move (in particular John 3:16 and Romans 8:32).
- 7) A reading has been suggested that sees Abraham, Isaac and the ram as three characters united together in the singular theme of sacrifice. Sacrifice within Genesis 22 has often been bypassed as a heightened narrative theme within the general hermeneutic process. Often sacrifice is able to regain focus within an HR/RHP Christocentric move, but few point to the reality that from start to finish the narrative is about, a) going to sacrifice in a specific location, b) sacrificing in this location, and c) returning from the sacrifice. Neither is it common to note that all three characters support this theme throughout as objects of sacrifice. It is because of this that, in the special hermeneutic move to Christ, all three characters, can be seen as types of Christ. In this the baton of typology passes from Abraham, to Isaac, and to the ram, just as in the Genesis 22 text the baton of sacrifice is similarly passed. Again we find that the OT informs the NT, as much as NT agrees with, and re-informs and confirms, the OT reading.

Greidanus and Kuruvilla Compared

We have engaged in detail with the interpretation of each scholar. We can now, by comparison and contrast, offer some overall critique of the methodologies of Greidanus and Kuruvilla in both theory and practice.

It must be stated that overall both scholars have been seen to present well worked out hermeneutic methods in their respective styles and their methods have been well applied to the central example text of Genesis 22. Greidanus' RHP move that utilises Passover typology is consistent and potentially persuasive as it moves to Christ via a clear progression. In so doing it is able to demonstrate the plan, purposes and promise/fulfilment of God in Christ in a seamless movement that links OT with NT. Greidanus is thus able to affirm the Christian nature of the whole canon in the congregant's mind. Likewise, Kuruvilla also demonstrates his own hermeneutic clearly, as he takes the OT text seriously and fully on its own terms. As he does, he reveals the theology within the text as divine demand, and then applies this to the believer in terms of what it means to be Christ-like. The congregant is left with the certain knowledge that they have a clear understanding of the concerns of the OT text with nothing of consequence left unturned. They can easily see and apply this theology to their life Christiconically in terms of sanctification by obedience to divine demand.

These two different hermeneutics utilise the 'rule of centrality' in very different ways and so their special hermeneutic moves to Christ should be clarified in its function.

Approaches to the Rule of Centrality and Canonical Interpretation

Neither scholar utilises the rule of centrality as many of the early Church Fathers/Apologetists did classically, i.e. in terms of the OT's witness to the real presence of the pre-incarnate Christ in text and history.¹ Greidanus' methodology is based firmly in the later, now classic, evangelical HR understanding of Christ who is present in the OT as promise and in the NT as fulfilment (an

¹ For example, Greidanus rejects the idea of 'The Angel of the Lord' as being the second person of the Trinity by arguing in terms of this being problematic for the understanding of the incarnation as concerning Jesus of Nazareth. While, for Kuruvilla the same idea is a problem for the concept of 'Trinity', for he suggests that this effectively claims four members of the Godhead. Neither scholar deals with 'the real presence of Christ' in the OT in any detail. They perhaps dismiss this far too quickly as such an understanding within interpretation has been evident throughout the greater part of reception history (and at times when the concepts of incarnation and the nature of Trinity were significantly argued). Indeed, many of the scholars Greidanus and Kuruvilla engage with positively, often interpret in this way, e.g. Church Fathers, Calvin and Spurgeon, and this approach is still used often within the Orthodox Church which takes much of its theology from a neo-patristic synthesis of 'the Fathers' and is able to simultaneously hold together strong doctrines of 'Trinity' and 'Incarnation' with 'the real presence' of the second person of the Trinity' within the OT. See Greidanus (1999: 2-3, 54), and Kuruvilla (2013: 23). As an example of a current Orthodox hermeneutic that engages with 'the real presence of Christ' in the OT see Behr, John 2006, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death*, New York, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

interpretational development that has stepped onward, and away, from the Church Father's 'real presence of Christ' understanding).

Kuruvilla's method also steps onwards, as again hermeneutic methodology for preaching finds new concepts for interpretation, and he is certainly not alone in this movement, though he may well be the first to present a full hermeneutic programme for such thinking in regards to preaching.²

Initially, those of an evangelical tradition who are versed in HR interpretation may well be quick to claim Kuruvilla's Christiconic method as non-canonical, because it seems to reject the NT witness by not engaging with the NT's specific textual usage/allusion of the OT text to be preached. However, the Christiconic method does indeed take the canon seriously because the Christian congregant approaches the sermon with an understanding of Christ, and therefore they have an understanding of what Christ-likeness looks like as recorded in the NT, i.e. their own Christian context is utilised by Kuruvilla's methodology. In this, the witness of the NT brings a broad and extensive understanding to the OT text, while indeed not dwelling (in theory) on explicit NT texts/allusions that speak of the OT text. For Kuruvilla, such 'proof texts' are simply often misleading due to the way the NT writers at times use OT texts/narratives when referring to them. In this he privileges the OT text, as the primary text, the text that is to be preached.

While both scholars present strong interpretations, it must be clearly stated that due to the very nature of each method, there are indeed intrinsic strengths and weakness built into each hermeneutic, for if one is to privilege either the text of the pericope, or indeed the text with HR/RHP, this will determine interpretational direction in the movement to Christ.

Strengths and Weaknesses:

Greidanus: Strengths

Greidanus' hermeneutic brings an approach to preaching/teaching that has great strength in terms of a style of communication that can be considered holistic with regards to the preaching of the canon within the church. When applied well, the HR/RHP move has a considerable breadth of ability within a single sermon to engage congregants with: a) the OT text, b) biblical theology, c) doctrine, d) the NT, and e) the Gospel as applicable to believer and non-believer alike. In this Greidanus makes no assumption as to his audience's salvific state.

² However, Kuruvilla's Christiconic hermeneutic has much in common with Childs' and Moberly's canonical approaches.

Greidanus: Weaknesses

We have seen that Greidanus sets out in his general hermeneutic move to look at the OT text in relative canonical isolation to determine the concerns of the specific text, before moving from this point to Christ. However, in reality he does not establish the concerns of the specific OT text on its own terms without regard to the RHP and the NT. It is clear that as he is making decisions on the OT text's concerns he has one eye on the move forward, and one on the text to be preached. This point is not a criticism; rather it acknowledges that often the HR move itself will determine what is to be heightened in the OT text that is to be preached, rather than the text itself fully dictating its own primary concerns. In this Greidanus could be said to privilege HR with the whole canon (OT and NT), as much as he does the specific text to be preached. Of course, this broad 'privileging' also means that some primary concerns of the text to be preached may be lost along the way. This has been shown regarding Genesis 22 when Greidanus does not use the text's own claims, regarding the test as concerning the 'fear of God' (22: 12), but moves to focusing on Isaac (rather than Abraham) who is then substituted by the ram, by God who provides ('provided' being his key word/theme), as he combines his 'longitudinal theme' of substitutionary atonement with his RHP move to Passover typology.³

A further possible weakness in Greidanus' method is that he is not strong on application for the believer within his Genesis 22 sermon. He effectively teaches the passage and the RHP within the canon and makes a final challenge /application as a Gospel message. Greidanus' final application is 'the Lord provides his Son for you... Don't miss out on the meaning of Christmas this year: The Lord provides the lamb.'⁴ His alternative ending remains evangelistic, though is differently emphasised. He states, 'All He requires is that you show yourself to be a true son and daughter of Abraham by believing in Him.'⁵ Clearly Greidanus is strong on Gospel, and yet not as strong regarding its application to the believer (in this instance).⁶

³ It can also be seen as he rejects 'faith' as a central theme to be preached, stating that Heb. 11:17-19 and James 2:21-22 'do not form a direct link to Christ.' For he sees 'faith' as a theme that should not be preached as a central concern of the text because no HR progression forward is evident for him. See Greidanus (2007: 204).

⁴ Greidanus (1976: 7).

⁵ Greidanus (1976: 8).

⁶ For example, this might perhaps be applied to the believer in terms of one of the following: a) confession, b) ongoing repentance, c) salvation in the continual present tense, or d) as concerning God's grace as available in human failure. This would align with his hermeneutic/Gospel purpose.

Kuruvilla: Strengths

Unsurprisingly Kuruvilla's strengths are more-or-less the exact opposite of Greidanus' weaknesses. Kuruvilla has clearly demonstrated just how committed he is to remaining with the OT text at all times, even to the point where he is interpreting textual omissions - which he has argued are the concern of the text. His general hermeneutic approach is excellent in terms of full interaction with: a) the text, b) the co-text, c) wordplay, d) word choices, and e) words repeated.

With Kuruvilla's movement to 'Christ-likeness' combining application with 'the rule of centrality' his method can only be strong on both sanctification and application to the believer.

Kuruvilla: Weaknesses

We have seen that Kuruvilla does not intend to preach: a) evangelistically, b) biblically-theologically, or c) doctrinally. This cannot be seen as a weakness in terms of methodology for he does what he sets out to do in not wanting to define preaching in these ways. In so doing he therefore defines 'preaching' in a different way to many. However, Kuruvilla's definition of preaching, as concerning 'obedience to the divine demand of the text', does result in the need for alternative teaching forums for these vital facets of church life (which he fully admits are needed). His definition of preaching may therefore make it difficult to easily incorporate these within specific church's programmes, liturgies and traditions. Therefore, such a hermeneutic may well run the risk of being the cause of the omission of some aspects of teaching and evangelism.

Kuruvilla's method requires his hearers to listen with established knowledge of the NT and Christ (to understand and apply Christ-likeness). If they do not possess this then in reality they have little possibility to obtain a correct understanding of the sermon preached in its Christ-like move to application because their context places them outside of the grasp of the preacher's methodology.

Further to this, Kuruvilla's assumption, that all canonical pericopes have a theology which presents divine demand, is likely to produce teaching within the church that perhaps leans too strongly towards sanctification and the believer 'doing' (it could certainly be heard this way). However, the canon contains multiple genres and mixings of genres. Some texts are historical and informative in nature (as we have seen regarding 1 Chronicles 1-9). Some are theological in nature, and some are both (Genesis 22). Some concern what God has done (e.g. Genesis 1-2) and therefore may simply be taught as material to inspire the believer to worship. Other texts concern what humans should do (e.g. the Decalogue). There is little doubt that all such

texts can in some sense fit into the pattern of divine demand. Yet it might be suggested that, in its quest for a one-size-fits-all approach that is easy to apply and reproduce, Kuruvilla's hermeneutic may well have overreached its bounds if applied to all genres, for not all Scripture is concerned with human obedience.

Kuruvilla's method certainly has a very high regard for the biblical text, but at times it does seem capable of paying less attention to: a) how a text is to be received by a hearer, b) genre, and c) the text's tone (e.g. encouraging, affirming, worshipful, prayerful). These should be seen as important for they too are the concerns of the text that needs to be privileged.

Two Final Points Concerning the Observation and Analysis of Praxis:

1) Resonant Narrative Parallels which Overtake Method and Interpretation

We have seen that Kuruvilla uses both John 3:16 and Rom. 8:32 in his exegesis and sermon, and yet he has argued that it is likely that these texts do not allude to Genesis 22. However, by using them he effectively assumes the often seen classic interpretational position that claims Genesis 22 as a forerunner to Golgotha via parallel narrative resonance. Certainly the way Kuruvilla utilises these texts means that his listeners will hear this as such. This position is one that often seems to be almost impossible for the Christian to avoid, and von Rad has been suggested as a good example of this with his suggestion that, for Abraham the *Akedah* has something to do with 'the road out into God-forsakenness.' If an OT scholar such as von Rad can make such an allusionary 'lapse' (so called), within his own discipline, it should perhaps be of no surprise that Kuruvilla might also do so from within his hermeneutic/homiletic discipline. Yet like von Rad, this arguably moves Kuruvilla outside of his methodological approach and beyond its concerns and its findings.

Greidanus of course does utilise specific NT verses and allusions. However, we find that he also breaks free from his hermeneutical moorings. Having set out an argument for the ram as type he too cannot avoid defaulting to alternative NT allusions that suggests a typology of Isaac as a type of Christ and Abraham of God the Father, as he closes his sermon by using John 3:16.

Therefore, this gives rise to questions concerning parallel narrative allusions. Two possibilities here might be suggested: a) each scholar could return to their individual hermeneutics and rework their findings/sermons more strictly in accordance to their methodologies (thus avoiding John 3:16, Romans 8:32 and the associated typology), or b) if they do not see the laying aside of these verses as ultimately appropriate for interpretation, it might be suggested that, as both scholars default to incorporating this strong narrative parallel/resonance (with its relevant typology), this facet of interpretation, at least on occasion, should indeed be considered hermeneutically apt.

Sanctification or justification, or both?

Ultimately Greidanus' and Kuruvilla's differing hermeneutics emanate from different presuppositions.

Greidanus assumes that, a) The canon is a work that presents to the Christian what God has done, and is doing, b) 'The Gospel' is evident in every pericope, c) The preacher's task is to determine 'the Gospel' from the text and HR movement, and present this to the congregant using relevant and evidential links to Christ.

In essence Greidanus' hermeneutic is therefore one that presupposes that the canon is primarily always concerned with justification, and therefore the conveyance of this is the preacher's task. In the case of Genesis 22 this is preached evangelistically for a first response in conversion, rather than applied in an ongoing justificatory way to the believer.

Kuruvilla on the other hand assumes that, a) The canon is a work that primarily presents what the human should do in response to God, b) 'Divine demand' is evident in every pericope, c) It is the preacher's task to determine 'divine demand' from the text and ask their hearers to apply it to themselves in obedience to become more like Christ, who they already know.

In essence Kuruvilla's hermeneutic is therefore one that presupposes that the canon is primarily concerned with sanctification, and that therefore for him the conveyance of 'divine demand' is the preacher's task.

Each scholar's assumptions are of course supported with biblical persuasion as both positions can be biblically argued for with ease as the Scriptures are concerned with both salvation and holiness. Because both scholars argue their position biblically, it might be suggested that a position which holds both views simultaneously may well be considered well-reasoned.⁷ Therefore, here an amalgamation of both scholars' assumptive positions could be deemed as important because:

- 1) The canon is concerned with salvation and justification and therefore not every pericope should necessarily be read through the hermeneutical approaches of Greidanus and Kuruvilla, for both methods steer interpretation toward a given end which may not be in keeping with the given text that is to be preached.
- 2) The canon is concerned with what God has done/is doing in relationship with humanity, as well as what the believer should do in response to this.

⁷ For example, see biblical arguments/references in Greidanus' section *Jesus Christ Is the Link between the Two Testaments* (Greidanus (1999: 49-50)). Kuruvilla's main 'go-to' verse/s, outside of his argument for a continuation of Law/law, is 2 Tim. 3:16-17 (as shown).

- 3) One can never tell the salvific state positioning of the congregant/hearer. Therefore, it would seem wise to present challenge and application to both those that might appear to be saved as well as those that might appear to be lost.

I have suggested that Kuruvilla may well have considered/utilised Genesis 22 when forming his hermeneutic. Indeed, it can be argued that the three above points can be found within the passage to some considerable degree. Justification (faith) contends with sanctification (human obedience) as God's directive as the Author of the test reiterates and adds to blessing and promise through Abraham's free and faithful response – faith that is given is faith that responds obediently.

Interpretively one might say that Genesis 22 seems to almost demand a meshing of the hermeneutics of Greidanus and Kuruvilla. Thus, one might well be drawn to ask either, "Do both hermeneutics only find relevance when being applied to texts that require the individual specific concerns of each method" or, "Is it really possible to combine such opposing works, and to combine them well?" However, the answer to this last question seems to be that a hermeneutic approach that seeks to combine all of both approaches will be found both impossible and wanting.

Perhaps the hermeneutic that combines justification with sanctification and that utilises parallel narrative resonance to do so is the only reading that can do full interpretive justice to Genesis 22. Perhaps James' commentary on Genesis 22 is the foundation for the beginnings of such an amalgamation (James 2: 21-22),

Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with works, and faith was brought to completion in works.

Concluding Postscript

We have seen that the *Akedah* is a text that concerns a test within the realm of the seemingly impossible, and that for the preacher Genesis 22 also concerns a very significant test. While, approaches and readings hardly outnumber 'the stars in the sky or the sand on the seashore' they certainly differ greatly and are indeed most varied. In particular here, the often claimed polar opposites of: Law and Gospel, works and grace, and salvation and sanctification have revealed their hands in the forming of methodologies which have brought diverse interpretations and preaching. However, we have seen that by gracious imposition, it is the 'resonant narrative parallel' which has brought common ground to the opposing hermeneutical approaches of both Greidanus and Kuruvilla.

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? – Romans 8:32.⁸

⁸ ESV.

Appendix I

A copy of the transcript of Sidney Greidanus' unpublished 1976 sermon on Genesis 22 follows overleaf (he has given permission for its use in this thesis).

8, 13, 14
Read: Gen. 22:1-19. Text: Gen. 22:1, 2, 12, 13, 17, 18

± 1976

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

We just sang, "God moves in a mysterious way," and that is certainly the way Abraham must have experienced God's leading. It was "Mysterious", because Abraham did not know what God had in mind. As spectators, we can oversee the whole episode from ^{strange} beginning to ~~and~~ happy ^{ending} ~~end~~, but Abraham ^{experienced} ~~saw~~ only that strange beginning ^{without knowing the end}. ~~He had heard a voice during the night which said: "Abraham, take your son Isaac and offer him as a burnt offering."~~ As readers we are told that God tested Abraham, but Abraham himself didn't know that this was only a test. As far as he knew, God was deadly serious: Offer your son, your only son.

The writer tells us, however, that this was God's way of testing Abraham's faith and obedience. Abraham, of course, had been tested before. ^{God was refining him as gold in a fire, so that he could be the father of believers.} When he was 75 years old the Lord had said to him: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation." ^{Can you imagine emigrating at age 75? Pulling up stakes and leaving for an unknown country? Just trusting God at his word that he will lead you to a certain country?} Abraham obeyed ~~God's command. He left his fatherland; he left his relatives behind even though you don't have any children at age 75?~~

Abraham certainly had a strong faith. He left everything behind and with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and his servants he had ~~moved to another arrived in that other country.~~ But whatever happened, Abram saw very little ^{concrete evidence} ~~of the fulfillment of the promise~~ that he would become a great nation. In fact, he had to separate from his only relative Lot. And no children were born to Abraham and Sarai. After ~~many~~ ¹⁰ years of waiting in vain, Sarai thought of a way to help God keep his promise. If Abraham would take her maid as his wife, they might get a child by her. Abraham took Hagar, and Ishmael was born when Abraham was 86 years old. God told him, however, that this was not the child of ^{the} promise. Finally, when Abraham was 100 years old and had given up all hope, God provided the promised son, Isaac. ^(Up to now, remember, at the instigation of Sarai, he thought but all was not enough for Abraham, little) At the instigation of Sarai, Abraham had to send Hagar and Ishmael away, and so all he had left was ^{his son} Isaac. ~~But that was not enough. Isaac was with him, but Sarai was gone.~~ If you trace the history of Abraham ^{in the Bible} you will notice

this process of reduction. When he responded to God's first call, he had to leave behind his entire past, his fatherland, his relatives, everything ^{dear to him} he had to leave behind. ~~him~~. Even that one relative he took along, Lot, was too much; they had to separate. And finally Abraham had to send away his son Ishmael. He had to burn all the bridges behind him, so to speak. There was no return possible. Abraham had to go forward with God and his son Isaac. Isaac was the son of the promise. Isaac was the concrete embodiment of the future. In him all the blessings God promised ~~are~~ ^{were} invested and guaranteed. God had promised to make of Abraham a great nation--without Isaac it couldn't come true. He had promised to Abraham's seed the land of Canaan--without Isaac it couldn't come true. ^{God} He had promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed in Abraham--without Isaac it couldn't come true. Isaac was the embodiment of ~~@~~ all God's promises; Isaac was the ~~embodiment~~ ^{Israel's future} of all of Abraham's hopes.

Then one night God calls on Abraham and asks him to burn ~~that~~ bridge in front of him as he had burned the bridges behind him. God asks Abraham to offer his son Isaac, ~~the only guarantee he had that~~ to offer the future, to offer the only ^{visible} guarantee he had that God's promises would be fulfilled.

As we said, Abraham did not know that this was only to test his faith. All he knew was that God had ~~asked him to~~ ^{asked him to} make this tremendous offer, to cut off all guarantees, and to ~~walk~~ ^{rely} ~~by blind faith~~ rely solely on God. ~~The tremendous~~ ^{God realizes that he is asking a great deal of Abraham} You notice from God's command that God ~~In God's command you notice the awareness that Abraham is being~~ ^{Notice the} asked to offer his all. There is this build-up of phrases, ^{in 2} Abraham, take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." God is asking Abraham ~~to offer his son as a burnt offering~~ not merely to send his son away as he ^{sent away} ~~had done~~ Ishmael; God is asking this father to ^{offer} ~~burn~~ his only son ~~as~~ as a burnt offering the way he always offered animals. The father himself ^{is being} ~~was~~ asked to sink the knife into his ~~own~~ son and burn him on the altar.

Can you imagine what must have gone through Abraham's mind that

night. ^{9 think} He must have tossed and turned, seeking a way of escape from obeying God's commandment. Perhaps his mind was playing tricks on him; perhaps it wasn't God who had spoken to him; or perhaps God had said ~~this~~ it but didn't ~~mean~~ mean it quite the way it sounded. How could God order him to offer the son of the promise on which his whole future depended?

We are not told what ^{all} went through Abraham's mind. ^{We read only} ~~It must~~ ^{of Abraham's immediate obedience} have been a real struggle, but as God provided the test, so God provided faith to meet the test. ~~We read that~~ ^{So} Abraham rose ^{at 3} up early in the morning, saddled his ^{ass} donkey, cut wood for the burnt offering, and with Isaac and two servants ~~they~~ ^{out long & tortuous} started ^{the} journey. ~~For two full days they travelled~~ What a torturous journey it must have been. For two full days they travelled, and ^{only} Abraham ~~alone~~ knew the ^{goal} objective of their mission. ~~Every step~~ He couldn't unburden his heart to anyone and every step of the way ^{the words must have echoed in his mind:} ~~he must have heard the echo:~~ Offer your son, your only son, whom you love.

Finally, on the third day they saw the place in the distance. Abraham left his servants behind with the donkey and continued the journey alone with Isaac. Isaac carried the wood for the burnt offering; Abraham himself carried the fire and the knife. "So they went both of them together," father and son. ~~it didn't take long for Isaac to notice that something was~~ missing. "Father," he said, "behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

This question must have cut ^{right} through Abraham's heart. Could he really go through with ^{it?} ~~this~~? And what should he say in response to the question? Share the terrible secret with his son? Evade the question? Lie about it? In response to Isaac's question, Abraham threw himself on God's mercy. ^G "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." ^{God will provide, that's faith speaking.} And again we read the touching phrase: "So they went both of them together."

Soon they ~~came~~ ^{went} to the place where the offer ~~is~~ to be made. The narrative slows down and very deliberately records every action: "Abraham built an altar; he laid the wood in order, he bound Isaac his son," ^{and} laid him on the altar on the wood. Then Abraham ~~put forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son~~

~~Abrahamxxxxxx~~

Would he really go through with it? Did he trust God so much that he could offer this son in whom his whole future was bound up? Did he ~~love God more than his son?~~ ^{Did} Would he obey God in faith rather than follow his own ~~reasons and feelings?~~ ^{desires}

Relentlessly the narrative pushes on to the moment of truth: "Then Abraham put forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."

I think all fathers and mothers here will agree with me that we cannot really understand how Abraham could overcome his natural affection for his son, pick up a knife, and be ready to slay him simply because God said so. The Bible tells us that it was faith in God that made possible this supreme sacrifice. Hebrews 11 says that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Abraham was ready to annihilate Isaac, the ^{only} ~~visible~~ fulfilment of God's promises; ^{he was ready to} and walk once again not by sight but by faith. Hebrews 11 goes on to say: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom it was said, 'Through Isaac shall your descendants be named.'" ~~He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead.~~ ^{of} How was Abraham able to do this. The writer ~~in~~ ^{he says; Abraham} Hebrews suggests that it was faith; specifically: "He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back."

~~Abrahamx Later we will come back to this thought that Abraham did receive Isaac back from the dead, be it figuratively. The point we want to make now is in answer to the question: How could Abraham do it? Hebrews answers: By faith; faith which does not need to see fulfilment in order to believe; faith which can in blind obedience destroy even the last thread of visible fulfilment because it believes that nothing is impossible for God. If need be, God could bring Isaac back even from the dead.~~

Personally I stand amazed at the strength of Abraham's faith. And I think that ~~that~~ is the first point this story wants to make. It is not for nothing that Abraham is called the father of believers. He is ^{called} that because he trusted God all the way. ~~His faith was~~

The writer ^{of this narrative} wants to remind Israel and us of the ~~tremendous display~~ ^{great faith} which lies at the root of the nation of Israel. ^{displayed by} ~~that was found in~~ the father of the nation of Israel. ^{"God will provide."} ~~displayed by~~ His faith was so great that he obeyed God rather than ~~give in to~~ his own feelings and desires. That faith, that ^{inclination} ~~blind~~ obedience, lies at the root of the nation of Israel, ^{at the source of the church.} In response to that faith, God caused ^{the} ~~a~~ nation ^{the church.} to be born.

Never again did God test a man the way he tested Abraham. No other father ^{human} was ever asked to offer his son, ^{the way} ~~except God the~~ father himself. But God does require of us that same kind of faith which ^{we} ~~commit~~ ^{a person} ~~entirely~~ to God and ^{by which we} ~~make him~~ obey God's will in spite of hardship ^{and} or opposite desires. ^{"God will provide"} ~~Such faith and obedience formed the cornerstones of the nation of~~ ^{of that is your sterling point, you can obey Him, no matter what. And he will provide!} Israel. ^{But God has blessed his people with great faith} On people who so trusted the Lord, God bestowed his blessings ^{who have obtained out of their faith} ~~that.~~ Abraham was the first to experience ^{that.} God stopped him

from offering his son, ~~in the nick of time.~~ God ~~wasn't~~ did not want the death of Isaac; he only wanted to test the faith of Abraham. Abraham ~~had~~ passed that test with flying colors. The angel of Jahweh said: "Do not lay your hand on the lad..., for now I know that you fear God, ^{that is to say, that you obey God.} seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me." ^{You see, how this is obedience to the first & great commandment that we love God above all.} And immediately God blessed ^{immediately} ~~him~~ Abraham's obedience by providing a substitute ^{offer} for Isaac.

^{When he threw himself on God's mercy,} Without quite realizing what he was saying, Abraham had earlier said to Isaac: God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering. And now God did provide that lamb. Abraham heard a noise behind him, he looked, and there was a ~~lamb~~ ram caught in the underbrush with his horns. Abraham went over, took the ram, and, we read, "offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son." God had provided a substitution for his son. The ^{lamb} ~~ram~~ would die and ^{Isaac} ~~his son~~ could live.

Abraham probably did not realize that this substitute ^{offer} ~~prefigured~~ provided by God prefigured the lamb of God who would die for us on Calvary. ~~instead of us so that we might live. One day God would provide the great substitute. But Abraham nor Israel seem to have been very much aware of that. They realized only that God required animal sacrifices. Abraham only knew that God had provided a ram to take the place of his son on the altar. This care of God made~~ ^{God was good to him in providing a substitute for him and his son.} ~~Abraham was so impressed by God's provision~~

Try to think for a moment like an Israelite reading this story. Without Isaac there would not have been a nation of Israel. Without Isaac, no Israelite would exist. So Isaac embodied the nation of Israel. The Israelite would see himself represented by Isaac. He himself was lying there on the altar, the knife was raised over him and he was about to die.

Then in the nick of time God saved him. How? By responding positively to Abraham's faith, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." God had provided the lamb, and Abraham was so impressed by God's provision that he called the name of that place "The Lord will provide." In fact, ~~this whole episode when the existence of Israel hung in the balance is recalled~~ *The Lord's provision of a substitute lamb was remembered in Israel with* ~~is~~ a common saying: "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided." God had provided the lamb. Isaac ~~Israel~~ could be taken off the altar and the lamb took his place. The lamb was a substitute for ~~Isaac~~ Isaac, for Israel.

The lamb--a substitute offering. *You notice how close that is to* ~~He, that is very much like~~ the pass-over lamb. Moses prescribed "a male, a year old, without blemish." That pass-over lamb was first offered in Egypt. The blood of the lamb was put on the doorposts and the lintel. And that night the angel of death smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt. But he passed over the houses of the Israelites. Their first born were saved by the blood of the lamb. Israel was saved from death because a lamb was offered in their place.

And now reading the story of Abraham, the Israelite finds the same thing. The existence of Israel hung in the balance, but the Lord provided; he provided the lamb ^{as a substitute offer.} Saved by the ~~his~~ blood of the lamb.

The temple worship ~~further~~ *re-*iterated ~~the~~ idea that a lamb can die in the place of man. Men sinned, but they could bring ~~on~~ their sin offerings to the temple and offer the lambs on the altar. One lamb after another died in the place of man.

And suddenly our Israelite recalls that ~~the~~ the prophet Isaiah also writes about a lamb that dies instead of Israel. But Isaiah is not speaking about an animal; he is speaking of the Servant of the Lord: (53): "Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, so he opened not his mouth.... But he was wounded for our transgressions;

he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed."

"Like a lamb...." Who was that lamb? Open your NT and you find John the Baptist introducing Jesus as follows: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1.).

* Jesus Christ is the lamb who dies so that his people may live.

~~Reading this story of the lamb that was offered instead of Isaac, instead of Israel, we see from the NT perspective a shadow of what was to come.~~

Reading this story of Abraham from the NT perspective, we see a shadow of what is to come. The father of believers trusts that the Lord will provide the lamb for a burnt offering and God does provide. At that time it was a lamb. In Egypt it was again a lamb. In the temple, it was again one lamb after another.

But in the fulness of time, ^{the Lord} ~~God~~ provided his Son, his only Son, ^{and laid him on the altar} ~~whom he loved,~~ The Lord provided his own Son, so that he could die instead of his people. The Lord will provide.

That's what we celebrated at Christmas. The Lord provides his own Son to die in our place.

It seems to me we're terribly busy in this Christmas season. We rush from one Christmas celebration to another. We sing more than we ever do. We shop, buy gifts, wrap them, send out cards, write letters, decorate trees and houses, have parties, and who knows what else. We're so busy we sometimes think that we do all the providing.

Hold on a minute, our text says. Let's get back to basics. The Lord provides--that's why we can celebrate Christmas. The Lord provides his only Son for you. That's the heart of Christmas. Don't miss the meaning of Christmas this year: The Lord provides the lamb.

Amen

It ^{may} seem a little incongruous to speak of birth and death at the same time. ^{But} ~~Yet~~ for Jesus they were not so much different: the one would lead to the other. He came knowing that his way would lead from ~~the manger to the manger~~ Bethlehem to Calvary, from the manger to the cross. Yet he came willingly to die in our place.

Looking back at Christmas from our perspective, ~~when~~ we see very clearly that Christmas says more than "Joy to the world the Lord is come." Christmas also speaks to us of God's faithfulness and love. The Lord himself provided the lamb, his own son, and ~~lays~~ ^{might} him on the altar so that we ~~might~~ ^{could} live. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." God is faithful; he loves the world; he loves you. All he requires is that you ~~believe~~ show yourself to be a true son and daughter of Abraham by believing in Him.

Amen

Appendix II

Below is Sidney Greidanus' response by letter to Abraham Kuruvilla following Kuruvilla's review of Greidanus' 2007 book *Preaching Christ from Genesis*. Again Sidney Greidanus has kindly given his permission for the document's usage within this thesis. Kuruvilla's review is available to read on his own website (www.homiletix.org , cited 3/2/15). Original publishing details:

Kuruvilla, Abraham 2008, 'Book Review - Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons' *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 8, pp. 137-140.

Greidanus' letter

Professor Abraham Kuruvilla
Dallas Theological Seminary
3909 Swiss Ave.
Dallas TX 75204

Dear Abraham,

Thank you for spending valuable time to write a review of my book for *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society*. I do not make it a custom to respond to reviews, but yours contained some major misunderstandings which I simply have to clear up before you pass them on to your students and colleagues as "gospel truth."

You are right that I did not cover all the Genesis narratives "to keep the dimensions of the book within reasonable limits." But a more important reason is that, unlike Calvin, I do not believe that in this day and age one ought to preach continuously through a whole book (unless it is fairly short). To spend two or three years preaching through Genesis is counterproductive. I recommend preaching a series of five or six sermons on Genesis, then switching to different topics before returning for another short series on Genesis (see p. 38).

You claim that my "Christocentric theological approach ... does not appear to be driven by the specifics of the text." You overlook that I try to capture the specifics of the text in the *textual theme* which is on purpose formulated *before* any consideration of moves to Christ in the New Testament (See step 5 on p 474 and chapters 2 to 24). Moreover, the sermon theme is either identical to the textual theme or very close to it (See step 7 on p 475 and chapters 2-24).

Related to this, you claim, "Invariably, Greidanus' seven ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament results in straying from the particular text being considered." I think you failed to notice that I advocate that it is the *textual theme* that ought to be taken through the seven ways to Christ in the New Testament so that whatever New Testament passages are incorporated into the sermon they are related to the textual theme.

You list the many possible moves to Christ from Genesis 1:1-2:3 as if that were a bad thing. I may have to clarify that in Step 6c we are *brainstorming*, trying to list all the possibilities. Naturally, one cannot use all these ways in a sermon but must make a selection of the best two or three, as you will see in the sections on "Sermon Exposition" and as you can see in the sermon on Genesis 1 itself (see

pp 478-484). You add “(Quite surprisingly, Greidanus does not note the New Testament development of the concept of Sabbath rest in his treatment of Gen 1:1-2:3.)” Actually, this is not surprising, because Sabbath rest is outside the purview of this specific textual theme: “With his powerful word, the King of the universe created the earth as his good kingdom.” Had our text been Genesis 2:1-3, the theme of Sabbath rest would have been a good move to Jesus in the New Testament. As it is, when I explained these verses in the sermon, I did remind the congregation of Jesus’ saying that “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (See p 484).

You fault me for unfairly criticizing Allen Ross for moralizing Laban’s deception of Jacob. Although there are parallels between Jacob deceiving his father and Laban deceiving Jacob, this does not mean that the message of this narrative is that we will reap what we sow. If one wishes to preach that theme, one should select as text Proverbs 22:8 or Galatians 6:7-10. But if one preaches on Genesis 29:1-35, one should stick to the specifics of that passage and not read it through the lense of Proverbs or Paul. And even if one should come to the conclusion that the narrator’s point is that Jacob reaps what he has sown, one cannot just generalize this specific instance into a universal law that God will deal in the same way with all Israelites.

I was surprised that you seem to fault me for “significant duplication of ‘Sermon Goals.’” Assuming that these narratives were aimed at Israel living in the same historical situation, Israel’s needs would have been the same. So one would expect similar *textual goals*. And if one wishes to be textually specific, as you do, then these similar textual goals will lead to similar sermon goals. Your case would have been much stronger if you had accused me of duplication of sermon *themes*, because sermon themes have to be textually specific and therefore will be different for different texts. Yet I found that the message of some narratives was so similar to that of other narratives that I ended up with some similar themes. And why not? If the author reiterates the theme of God’s presence with his people, surely I should follow suit.

Finally, your comment, “The preacher who employs Greidanus’ sermon goals is in danger of being trapped in tedious repetition.” It does not follow that duplication of sermon goals leads to repetition. I use the goal only to inform the tone of the sermon and the contents of the sermon introduction and conclusion. The theme informs the body of the sermon as it seeks to expose the meaning of the text. In order to determine whether my approach leads to repetition, one should check the sermons that result. I have included three sermons in the appendixes and they are all different. Of course, they all have different themes. But what about narratives that have similar themes? As you can see in the sections on “Sermon Exposition,” the sermons would still be different because they deal with different narratives, a different plot line, different characters, and different nuances.

Abraham, I hope these reflections will be somewhat helpful for you to better understand my approach. You have raised some important homiletical issues. If you should have a discussion with your colleagues at Dallas Seminary, feel free to copy this letter to them. I have many good memories of our stay at the Seminary some five years ago.

Sincerely,

Sidney Greidanus

Below is Sidney Greidanus' response on 14/1/15 to the author of this thesis subsequent to my enquiry regarding the possibility of him having preached on Genesis 22. It is included as it reveals an interesting exchange regarding both scholars' positions concerning very different hermeneutics approaches.

Dear Alvin,

Jean Garahan, one of our secretaries at Calvin Seminary, forwarded your letter to me. I suspect you could have contacted me directly had you googled, Sidney Greidanus. In any case, you got through to me.

First of all, I wish to congratulate you on coming up with an interesting topic for your thesis, limited enough to go into detail yet broad enough so we won't get bored. The name Walter Moberly sounded familiar to me – sure enough I quoted him in my book on Genesis.

Secondly, I can hardly believe how lucky you are – better, how God in his providence is smiling down on your project. It so happens that Dr. Kuruvilla wrote the worst review of my book *Preaching Christ from Genesis* I ever saw. I am not in a habit of responding to reviews but in this one case I did. It also so happens that I had not discarded my old computer and was able to retrieve my response to him. I will attach it to this email in WP and Word.

It also so happens that I did preach on Genesis 22:1-20, but long before there were computers. After a long search I located the sermon I preached in Advent somewhere between 1976 and 1978, I'm not sure when. If you think this sermon will be helpful to you, let me know where I can send it. But give me a few weeks for I need first to complete my work on a psalm. Then I'll have to drive to the Seminary to photocopy it, then to the post office to mail it. After all that, I think you owe me a copy of your thesis (email is o.k.)

I wish you well in your work.

Sid Greidanus

P.S. Kuruvilla wrote a short but courteous response. The key paragraph was: "Your comments have served (and will continue to serve) as a helpful springboard to many fruitful discussions. I do realize that significant differences remain between our respective approaches to preaching."

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